

SERMONS

ON THE

EVILS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD,

AND ON

VARIOUS OTHER TOPICS

FROM THE GERMAN OF THE

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SERMON XXIX.

The Triumph of Death and the Triumph of Life.

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GOD, whose infinite love is even then displayed when thy unsearchable wisdom must be revealed to thy feeble children in scenes of terror; thou didst deliver up thy son to death, to the painful death of the cross, for giving us the greater certitude of life, of life everlasting! In him dying, thou hast exhibited to us all the terrors of death, in order to deliver us from those terrors for ever, and the more firmly to establish our hopes of immortality! For, thou didst not leave him, our leader, our chieftain, our Lord, among the dead; thou didst resuscitate him from the grave, and thereby hast convinced us that we also are called by thee to life, to an unterminating life! Henceforth let darkness and might apparently be the end of our course, and the sky and the earth seem to vanish from our view; thou hast most authentically informed us, that we shall wake again to the bright beams of day, and through darkness force our passage into

VOL. II. B resplendent

resplendent light ! Oh let us recognize and admire this inexpressible instance of thy mercy with cheerful gratitude and with heartfelt emotion ! Let us, whenever we meditate on the victory of death over us and over all that surrounds us, never forget likewise the victory obtained over it by thy son ! Let us, with him, our deliverer, let us, like him, with steadfast faith in thy eternal love, in perfect resignation* to thy holy will, die, that we also with him may live ; and, carrying our view beyond the grave and corruption, may confidently behold our resurrection and a better, an everlasting life before us. But grant that in order to die with him, we may faithfully copy that pattern of life which thou hast given us in him, daily become more established in goodness and more accomplished in virtue, daily more thoroughly transfused with thy mercy and love, and that our endeavours to gain a nearer assimilation to him, may daily become more earnest and ardent ! Bless to that end the considerations to which we are summoned to-day by the solemnity of his resurrection ! Let them deeply penetrate us with love for him, that they may bring forth in us fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life ! These our supplications we offer up to thy divine majesty in thy name, and address thee further as he vouchsafed to teach us : Our father, &c.

1 CORINTHIANS, XV. 55 and 57.

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting !

O grave, where is thy victory ! But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ.

DEATH in our text is said to have a sting, the grave a victory ; both terms are figurative of what renders death and the grave alarming and terrific, both expressive of the apparent triumph of death and the grave. But the style of exultation in which the christian exclaims : O death, where is thy sting ! O grave, where is thy victory ! shews that the terrors of death and the grave are vanished, that their triumph is defeated. And so it is, christians, my brethren ! Life has vanquished death. The fairest prospects of continued duration, of immortality, of everlasting happiness have dispelled the horrid darkness of the grave. Of that we are reminded, of that we are certified by the return of this day ; the day when our lord arose victorious from the grave, and opened a passage through it to all his votaries, to all mankind. Yes ; when he, the chieftain of mankind, the prince of life, was consigned to the silent tomb, then the wild victorious yell of death and the grave rebellowed through the caverns of the earth bestrewn with corpses and corruption, then all the desires and hopes of mortals seemed as if buried with him. But when our leader and precursor burst the bonds of death, and stood forth

forth in renovated life divine, then those shrieking yells of victory were mute, then life was gloriously triumphant over death, then harmonious strains of jubilation echoed through the vast expanse up to the throne of heaven, from the mouth of mortal man now feeling his immortality. O my brethren, let us be partakers in this just and substantial joy, and gladly unite our voices in choral hymns of praise ! Exultingly let us exclaim, with the apostles of our lord, the witnesses of his resurrection : O death, where is thy sting ! O grave, where is thy victory ! Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ. And, that we may render this joy the more lively and rational, and be sensible to the whole extent of our happiness, let us on one hand contemplate the triumph of death, and on the other the triumph of life. Let us place darkness and light, the grounds of fear and the grounds of hope and confidence against each other.

Acute is the sting of death, prodigious the victory of the grave, shrill and terrible their triumph, when simply considered in themselves, and without regard to Jesus, the restorer of life, the vanquisher of the grave.

Terrible, in the first place, are the harbingers of death, formidable his menaces, tremendous the preparatives he makes for the destruction of life and the subversion of happiness. What a sable host of disasters, of diseases, of ills that taint the

the lagging wind, march gaunt and grim before him! What infirmities, what languors, what racking pains and mining cares, what shiverings, clammy sweats and struggles announce his arrival! What tears, what sobs, what wringing of hands, what shrieks of agony are seen and heard in his train! And how numerous, how poignant the darts supplied him for devastation! What is there in all nature that does not furnish him with weapons of destruction? Is there any motion, any occupation, any affliction, any enjoyment, any gratification, not pregnant with plagues and shedding seeds of disease, which may not prove mortal to man! How everything shudders at his approach! How quickly, as he advances fades every flower on the path of life! How every sound of joy and gladness is hushed at his tremendous call! What profound and awful silence, what dejection, what doleful apprehensions reign where he appears! How ghastly is the countenance of him who lies on the bed of sickness, pale and wan, faint and spiritless, longing in vain for help, for refreshment and relief, declining momentarily beneath the burden of pains and miseries, continually more incapable of joy, more insensible to comfort, anxiously fluctuating between death and life, between fear and hope, wishing to detain his fleeting life, and shivering as he beholds the near approach of death!

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The dominion of death is farther universal, my pious hearers, and this too increases his barbarous triumph. It stretches over everything that lives upon the earth. His ravages on this transitory scene are in a manner unbounded. No class, no species of living creatures is exempt from the lot of mortality, no individual is safe from the power of dissolution and corruption. As the flower fades, the leaf withers, the tree dies; so likewise man, the monarch of both the animal and inanimate creation, is a prey to death and the grave. Numerous and manifold are the victims which the grim spoiler daily and hourly demands of the human race, trampling all of them in the dust, without distinction of age, of rank, of station, of desert. Here the saint has no advantage over the sinner, the benefactor and reliever of his brethren no preference above the desolating conqueror and the cruel tyrant. Here lies the babe, who scarcely beheld the light of the sun, close by the hoary head which could no longer sustain its beams. There are mingled the ashes of the blooming youth with those of the ripened man; the ashes of the great and powerful with the ashes of their meanest slaves. Here falls the sinewy man, who seemed to brave every toil, every burden, every misfortune; there shrivels the beauty, who flourished like the vernal flower, and promised herself and others so rich a harvest of delight. All, all that is of the earth must revert
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to the earth from which it was taken. Whoever thou art, o man, that walkest on the ground, thou walkest on the territory of death ; wherever thou settest thy foot, thou treadest on the graves of the dead, thou raisest the dust that was formerly alive, from human mould thou reapest thy daily bread, the spade and the ploughshare lacerate the relics of thy ancestors.

Terrific is the triumph of death, as his arrival is generally unexpected and his power irresistible. Now he arrests one in the intoxication of pleasure, then in the careless repose of the night, now amidst preparatives for the enjoyment of life, then in the various distractions of business and affairs. Now suddenly snatching one from the circle of his gay companions, then another from the arms of his bosom friend, now an unexpected mischance at once lays him low, then an apparently trifling disorder in a few days or hours becomes incurable. Rarely do we hear his footsteps from afar, seldom are we aware of his approach ere his hand is already raised to give the fatal blow. And of how little avail are in general the earlier warnings of his approach ! How vain all the efforts of art, how fruitless the struggles of nature ! Here neither youth nor vigour, nor grandeur and authority, nor virtue and merit, can afford any protection. Death appears, and the most subtile energies of man recoil dismayed, and his most shining prerogatives

gatives disappear, and every attempt at resistance is only a proof of utter imbecility.

And the proper business of death, my pious hearers, how tremendous! How dreadful that renders his triumph! Who is not seized with profound horror at the spectacle! Gradual decay of the vital powers, total cessation of all arbitrary and mechanical motion of the body, inspissation of the various juices, universal darkness, profound night, frigidity, numbness, rigor, separation from the whole visible world, the grave, corruption, dissolution: this is the work of death; this the victory which he obtains over all that is mortal! And now consider moreover the circumstances of this awful scene, the agony that seizes on the dying person, the wishes for longer life which only desert him at the last gasp, the ties which knit him to the bystanders and survivors, hastily dissolving, the multiplication of his sufferings by their's, the reproaches which his conscience often makes him, and the apprehensions that so frequently torment him with prospects of a dark uncertain futurity: how much more appalling must all this make the triumph of death!

Yes, terrific is this triumph; since even the consequences that attend the ravages of death are deplorable, are abundant sources of tears and lamentation. How painful the separation, how deep, how incurable the wounds of the widow and the orphan;

orphan ; how irreparable is frequently their loss ! Here one faithful spouse is ravished from the embraces of the other, one half of such intimately united souls torn from the other ; there a smiling, innocent, promising infant snatched from its tender parents : here a worthy father taken from his still impotent, uneducated sons, a careful, affectionate mother from her daughter, still in want of her farther support and example ; there one hearty, generous friend carried off from another. Here a thousand judicious, public-spirited plans and projects are rendered abortive ; there the quickest and most lively parts are checked in their activity, and hopeful capacities prevented from unfolding. Here the industrious man is deprived of the fruit of his labour ; there the latent seeds of noble actions are blighted in their first germination. Here pleasures, transports, hopes, happiness of a thousand kinds are destroyed, there full and various sources of want, of trouble and misery are opened. Here the forlorn widow and the helpless orphan sit bathed in tears ; there distress and indigence surround others, bewailing the loss of their benefactors, their patrons, their guides. Thus sad and gloomy, my dear friends, is the path of death ! Thus terrific his appearance and the doleful consequences of his destructive sway ! Thus tremendous his triumph over all that lives and breathes ! Yes ; in this ghastly form must death appear to every one
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who considers it abstractedly in itself, solely in its proximate effects, and without the light of superior information, without the prospect into a better futurity. Sickness and pain before, and darkness all behind!

Is then after all, this triumph of death entirely what it appears to be, my pious hearers? Is it likewise to the christian, what it must be to the unbeliever and to the doubter? Rests it on a solid basis? Will it last for ever? No, christians, my brethren, to-day ye are celebrating with me the resurrection of our master and lord. To-day we are celebrating the triumph of life, of life regained and fixed for ever by the risen Jesus. Oh rejoice in this with me, as with me ye ponder how much more magnificent, more glorious, more substantial is his triumph, than the specious, evanescent triumph of death.

Is the dominion of death universal, does it extend over all that is transitory and mortal: so is the dominion of life no less, and yet far more extensive, as it extends over all that was and is and is to come. Nothing perishes, nothing dies totally and for ever. Nothing perishes that shall not be restored, nothing dies that shall not live again. Even in the vegetable kingdom death and corruption are the germ and preparatives for new entrances and forms of life. The seed-corn cannot spring up, not blossom, not bear fruit, except it die. And if the winter with its nipping frosts
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seem to starve and to kill, yet the genial spring revives all again with renovated pomp and beauty. Let then the earth be covered with graves and the dead lie in heaps upon the dead; all this is no more than sowing for the future general harvest, and that harvest will be the richer and more glorious the richer the sowing was. In the long, wide field of God, the father of mankind, nothing is sown that shall not again shoot up, and bloom in far more beauty and perfection, than it did in its pristine state. Nay, even without regard to this revivification of all that once was dead, the dominion of death, apparently so universal, is not so in fact. No; only dust, only substances that are formed of dust, only the visible, gross, terrestrial shell of living and spiritual beings are subject to his destructive power. The energy by which they are animated, is indestructible, the spirit that inhabits them has no death to fear, no dissolution and corruption; it thinks and lives and acts even then, and thinks and lives and acts still more freely and nobly, when its shell is demolished, when its shell in the grave lies a prey to corruption. What distant zone can circumscribe the soul? Only the dust returns to the earth from whence it is taken; but the spirit ascends to God, whose breath, whose image it is, with whom it has already lived in alliance and communion, and to whom it is destined and able ever nearer to approach, with whom to have ever
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stricter association. O death, where is then thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? How limited is thy power! How fallacious thy triumph! Thou hast demolished the tabernacle of clay, but the inhabitant of the tabernacle which thou hast destroyed, has risen upon its ruins, is not destroyed with it: that still lives which thou hadst intended to extinguish. The immortal, which thou thoughtest to shut up in the dark and silent tomb and to bind with the bonds of corruption at the same time with the mortal, has soared aloft to its creator God, and lives and rejoices in the splendor of his light.

Is farther the power of death irresistible with regard to all mortal creatures, so is the force of life still far more, which strips even death and the grave of their spoils, which again collects the scattered fragments of their prey, and summons the corruptible to put on incorruption, the mortal immortality. It is the force of the Almighty, to which nothing is impossible; the energy of the eternal, inexhaustible fountain of being, of motion, of life; the energy of the God who brings light out of darkness, solves every incongruity however apparent into rectitude, reduces every entanglement of things however mysterious into the most beautiful simplicity, and can never intend any evil that should be absolutely and for ever evil; the power of the creator, of him who calls that which is not yet as though it were already
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ready present, at whose nod heaven and earth, suns and worlds and the whole innumerable host of their inanimate and living inhabitants arise and are and move and live! Where is the particle of dust, where the seedcorn of life that can escape the Omniscient; where the created power that is able to resist the call of divine, creative omnipotence; where the creature, susceptible of renovated and panting after higher life, that might not derive the fulness of life and joy from that eternal, neverfailing source of life? — And this power of the Almighty, which nothing is able to resist, dwells, reveals itself in his son Jesus, in the Resuscitated, whose festival we solemnize, whose redeemed and subjects we are. To him the Father has given the power, the high prerogative, to have life in himself and to produce, to diffuse, to restore life of numberless kinds around him. He is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him shall not die eternally, and him will he raise up at the last day. With irresistible potency his voice will penetrate the caverns of the tomb; will be heard over the dominions of the dead, and the sepulchres open to him, who has the keys of hell and of death; at his command every sea and every deep will give up its dead, and then will all who slumbered in the dust awake to a new superior life. Yes, to this end he was born and rose again from the dead, that he might reign over the dead and the living,

living, and lose none of all whom the Father gave him. Hail to him, the vanquisher of death, the demolisher of the gates of the grave! Through him death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our lord Jesus Christ!

Yes, my pious hearers, the dominion of death, tremendous as it may appear, is but of very short, but the dominion of life is of eternal, never-ending duration; and the triumph of the former is to the triumph of the latter as a moment to the ages of eternity. Let the body lie at rest for hundreds, for thousands of years in the bosom of the earth, what are those hundreds, those thousands of years in comparison to the eternity of the renovated life, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more sickness or pain? Let the darkness of the night of the grave with all its horrors last ever so long, appear ever so impenetrable, what is it when compared with the bright, the resplendent day by which it will hereafter be dispersed and to which no night will any more succeed? Even let the sleep of death endure whole mundane æras; what is that and what will it be at the glorious morning of the resurrection, but as a slumber from which one awakes revived, refreshed, to the fruition of superior everlasting joys? Oh how soon, how completely will that short duration of the dominion
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of death and the grave be lost in a boundless eternity, where all is animated and rejoicing in life and has no need to fear the loss of it again! Yes, thy triumph, o death! is the triumph of a moment; thy victory, o grave! is the victory of a transient stormy night: and then the everlasting morn appears; and then reigns and triumphs life, the most diversified, active, blissful life from everlasting to everlasting, and ages without end; and then are death and the grave forgotten for ever, and every vestige of corruption and decay is vanished and effaced!

And how much nobler, my pious hearers, is the business of life, of the life revealed by the resuscitated Jesus, than the work of death! Death destroys: life restores what has been destroyed. If the consequences of death be tremendous, yet they are completely effaced by the transcendent power of life; and the changes brought about by this, are the most happy, the most glorious that can be conceived. If death exults in the darkness and horrors that he spreads around him, life also triumphs in the splendor of the light and joy, which for ever dispels those clouds and horrors. Yes, here in the country of the immortals, the severed bands of virtuous love, of generous friendship shall be knit again, and far stronger, far closer than has been possible where all was subject to inconstancy and vicissitude. Here, in the resurrection of the just, all is reunited that was
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for a moment separated by death, and finds in the manner and consequences of its reunion a superabundant compensation for the loss it had sustained. Here, in the kingdom of life, every faculty that was confined and restrained is set in greater and nobler activity, every unexpanded capacity is developed, every leaning to good produced into action, every interrupted effort after higher perfection continued with success, every acquired good aptitude freely and fully applied, every frustrated exertion of patriotism rewarded with an enlarged sphere of operation, every sorrow converted into joy, every honest desire into fact and reality. Here misapprehended virtue is ~~drown~~ crowned with the most splendid prerogatives, and the integrity that was robbed of its reward by envy and malice, meets with its due desert. Here every one gathers a hundred and a thousandfold, what he had sown in hope. Here every pure and real pleasure, which was either troubled or drained by the rapid current of time, is enjoyed unmingled and undisturbed, and here gush forth such new and untried sources of pleasures, of joys, of felicities as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has apprehended! — —

And what will then thy triumph be, o death? What thy victory, o grave? Life and happiness thou seemest to destroy; annihilation and misery appear to follow thy steps; and yet thou leadest, even by the most dark and frightful path, to light,
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to superior life, to purer happiness. No, vain is thy triumph, o death! Fruitless thy victory, o grave! Thy power is destroyed; thy terrors are vanished; the christian is no longer deceived by thy hideous aspect! In vain dost thou menace him with everlasting darkness, with total destruction, with irreparable loss! Thy threats are the threats of a vanquished foe, which only appall the ignorant and timid. No; life has conquered death! Through him, the resuscitated Jesus, this victory is manifest and placed beyond all doubt. His triumph is complete; it is no less unbounded than everlasting! Oh magnify him, whether living or dying, as your deliverer! Let all rejoice in him, those that descend to the grave, as well as such as are now first opening their eyes to the light of the world! In him is life, the fullness of life; and from him it flows in all that has ever lived and still will live! Yes, with united voices let all the living and all the dead, all that are to be and all the dying, join the triumphant strain: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory, through our lord Jesus Christ!

Yes, christians, these devout and joyful sentiments should animate us more especially to-day! Joy, cordial, grateful joy should signalize this festival. May they shed light over all that might perplex and dismay us! What a quite different

value has now this life ! What a totally different aspect now has death ! Now the present has ceased to be a perplexing, inexplicable ænigma, and the future to be a frightful land with mists and darkness resting on it. Now is this short, uncertain life no more than the first stage of an everlasting duration, no more than an apprenticeship preparatory to a superior existence. Now is death only the passage into a freer, a better life. Now to the wise man, to the christian, neither the present can be unimportant and burdensome, nor the future tremendous. Now he may live at ease and die content, pass over in hope and comfort from one state into the other. Yes, herein, my dearest friends, we will rejoice to-day ; herein will we rejoice here at the table of our lord ; for this we will here at the solemnity of the commemoration of his death, present to him, the restorer of life, the tribute of thanksgiving and praise which we so justly owe him. Yes, he died, he expired on the cross, that we might live. He lives, and we also shall live with him. He has triumphed over the grave, and with him and through him shall we also rise above the dust and put on incorruption. As surely as he lives, so surely shall we not be extinguished in death, but pass through death to life. As surely as he leads a blissful, divine and glorious life, so surely shall we also take part in his glory and felicity if we be sincere followers of him. Yes, him our leader
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and forerunner will we sincerely follow. We will renew our vows to him here at the feast of his love, and these vows shall be ever sacred and inviolable to us. And then will we boldly pursue our course, constantly looking to him and to the glorious prize which he holds out before us; and with steadfast belief in our immortality put to flight all the terrors of death and the grave. His conquest is our's; his triumph shall likewise be our's. Let the sceptic, the infidel, shudder at the thought of death! Let them start and recoil with horror at the dark abyss that awaits them! We who are Christians have no need to be appalled at the sight. No, now let this frail tabernacle fall, it cannot involve its immortal tenant in its ruin! Now though death may rend from us children, consorts, friends, it cannot detain them from us for ever! We shall not be long divided from them; we shall find them again far more perfect and happy than when they left us! Now let clouds and thick darkness hide the whole visible world from our view, our spirit transpierces these shades, bursts into a light, to which the radiance of suns and stars is faint and obscure! Now let the grave open under our feet, when and wherever it pleases the creator of our body of dust; even this dust abides in his domain, under his inspection and controul, and will so surely arise recomposed from the grave, as surely as our leader and guide, Jesus, is risen from the dead.

dead. Now let our journey through life be ever so rough, ever so toilsome, ever so beset with dangers, it leads to a superior, a better life, to a life whose felicity and duration are equally great and equally infinite! Immortality, everlasting continuance, everlasting happiness, these, christians, these are our boast; and these should elevate our minds, purify our hearts, refine our taste, make every duty a delight, render us contented in every situation, resigned in all afflictions, and convert even death itself into a messenger of peace. Amen.

Easter-day.

SERMON XXX.

Of Loving God.

GOD, creator and ruler of heaven and earth, king of all kings and governour of all things, the worthiest of all objects to be dreaded, praised, honoured and beloved of us and of all rational creatures. Who is like unto thee, o Lord, among the gods; who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wondrous? Thy understanding is infinite; thy wisdom inscrutable; thy power has no bounds; life and death are in thy hands. To thee alone belong majesty and dominion. Who shall not fear thee? Who shall not prostrate himself in the dust before thee in humblest reverence? Penetrated with the profoundest veneration, we prostrate ourselves in thy presence, Almighty, and adore thy boundless grandeur. — But, great as thy power is, o God, so great is also thy loving kindness. Thy mercy reaches unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Thy compassions fail not: they are new every morning. Thou art not only the
creator

creator and lord, but likewise the benefactor, the father, the friend of mankind; thou never ceasest to bless us, and to do us good. Who shall not love thee above all things? Who shall not serve thee with delight and joy? Who shall not take all possible pains to please thee? Yes, o God, we clearly perceive our obligation to do so. Thy favour is our life, thy communion is our felicity. To love thee is the highest privilege of our nature, and the source of our everlasting felicity. To thee we here consecrate our heart, with all its affections. Accept the offering that is agreeable and well-pleasing to thee. Fill it by thy good spirit with an ardent love of thee. Eradicate from it all inordinate love of ourselves and of the world, and let it be thy temple, where thou shalt dwell and reign and rule alone. Bestow thy blessing to this end on the meditations to which we devote the remainder of the present hour. Let thy word efficaciously impress our minds to our improvement and sanctification. We address our supplications to thee for these benefits in the name of Jesus Christ thy son, who has taught us to know thee as our most affectionate and bountiful parent, and to say with heartfelt confidence: Our father, &c.

MATTHEW xxii. 37, 38.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

THE divine commandment which we have just now read, though a melancholy proof of the great corruption that prevails among mankind, is yet a manifest token of the excellency of the measures adopted by heaven for our amendment and recovery. Were not mankind in an eminent degree corrupt; had they not by sin forsaken God; were not their understandings darkened, and their hearts infested with inordinate and extravagant lusts; would there have been any need of commanding them to love God, their creator and lord, their father and benefactor? Would it have been necessary to urge them, by all kinds of remonstrances and motives, to the observance of so natural and so pleasant a duty? Would they not of themselves have fulfilled it with all possible care? Would they not have found their greatest satisfaction, their purest delight, in contemplating the perfection of the Most High, in the adoration of his infinite grandeur and majesty, in their intercourse with him, in his service, and in obedience to his commands? Certainly, their hearts, inflamed with love to him, would have sought their happiness alone in him and in correspondence with him; to please him and in return to be

be assured of his approbation, would have been their chief, their sole endeavour. It is sin alone, that pestilent source of every kind of inconsistency and disorder, that withholds us from loving with all our heart and with all our soul, the kindest sovereign, the most liberal benefactor, the most affectionate parent.

But, while the sacred precept in our text shews the height of our moral depravity, and reminds us of the deplorable condition into which we are fallen by sin; it likewise most clearly evinces the excellency of the measures which God has adopted for our improvement and sanctification. What can be more calculated to represent religion to us in a venerable light, and to inspire us with a reverence for it, than the declaration that its principal requisition consists in love? What is more adapted to move us, if we have any reflection and any feeling, than to be told, that God, that glorious being, who has no need of us, whom we have so highly offended, whom we have so many causes to fear, that this God requires of us that we should love him? And if that love have once taken possession of our soul, what is more adapted than it to animate us to perseverance in goodness, to diligence in sanctification, to a cheerful, vigorous and constant virtue? How easy must it be for us to comply with the other duties of christianity, even the most difficult, if we accomplish this greatest of all!

all! What should we then, my pious hearers, have more at heart, than to awaken, to cherish, and to confirm the love of God in our souls? What should more confound and afflict us, than to know that we are still strangers to this natural and delightful obligation, or that we do not discharge it with the ease and satisfaction which our duty and our proper interest require? Oh how many delicious hours, how many ravishing emotions do we lose, how little courage and fortitude for combating iniquity, how little consolation and hope in afflictions and death have we to expect, if we love not God, or if we love him not as we ought! May it then please the Lord to bless the considerations I now intend to lay before you on this important subject, so as to kindle in your hearts that ardent love of him, which is the abundant source of the purest virtue and the most exalted joy; or to grant it fresh supplies of nourishment and force!

In pursuance of this design, I shall first point out to you the sentiments and actions wherein the love of God is chiefly exhibited, and in which it principally consists. Secondly, I will explain how our love to God should be constituted, or what qualities it should possess, for being genuine. Lastly, I will enforce the reasons that oblige us to the love of God.

The first particular will employ your devotion at present. The two others, as the subject is of
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such vast importance, and comprises so many useful doctrines, must be reserved for another opportunity.

To love God implies in general to regard him from intimate conviction as our sovereign good, as the source of all our happiness; to delight more in him than in all things else; to prize and to covet his favour and fellowship above all things; and diligently apply ourselves to be approved of him. The love which we owe to God, differs not in the main from the love that we bear to our relatives and friends. Both that and this, in order to be sincere and lasting, must be grounded on the lively idea of the respectable and amiable qualities we discover in the object of our love. Both are displayed by the very same emotions and actions, of pleasure, of joy, of desire, of complacency, of obedience, and the like. Only we should beware, that we do not take the sensual and violent emotions that arise when the objects of our love are sensible and visible, for a necessary or essential part of that love which we entertain for God, the most perfect spirit. Our love of God must, as far as the present infirmities of our nature will allow, be conformable to his pure and exalted nature; in other words, it must be rational; and therefore it depends not so much on the vivacity and vehemence of our sensations, as on their stability and their influence on our conduct. This once premised, pious hearers, it will not be difficult
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for us to determine more accurately whereby our love of God is principally discovered and evinced. We need only consult our heart, for extending the comparison as we have qualified it.

Frequent meditation on God is the first particular by which the religious man evinces his love to the supreme being, and by which he declares it to be operative in him. How often, how cordially do we think on the friends whom we tenderly love! How deeply is their image engraven on our soul! On how many occasions does it recur to our mind! How attentively do we fix our view upon the intellectual form. The slightest resemblance reminds us of their features, of their speech, of their actions, of their eminent talents and endowments. These thoughts will not unfrequently intervene amidst our weightiest affairs, and we find a pleasure in cherishing and indulging them. Just so it is, pious hearers, with the good man respecting God. He often thinks, he thinks willingly and with heart-felt satisfaction, on that most amiable being. These ideas are so con-natural to him, that they present themselves to his mind on all occasions; they attend him everywhere; they mix in all his occupations, his pleasures, his joys and his sorrows. They are so agreeable to him, that he considers them as the life of his soul; that he nourishes them with all possible care, and dwells on them as long as his other duties will allow. Whichever way he turns
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his eyes, he finds on all sides shining traces of the wisdom, the omnipotence, the goodness of his creator ; every creature leads him to reflect on the glory and perfection of its author. They all exclaim to him in an audible voice : Great is our Lord, and great is his power ; there is no end of his greatness ; he is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works. Happen what will in the world, the religious man recognizes in every event, whether great or small, the hand of the sovereign ruler of heaven and earth, and adores his will, without which nothing is and nothing can be. Let his private circumstances take what turn they may, they lead him back to God : he considers them all in their dependance on him. Do his enterprises succeed ; does he enjoy peace, pleasure, and comfort : it is God, whom he reveres as the perennial fountain of all these benefits, to whom he is indebted for all, to whose blessing he ascribes the whole of his welfare. Do his plans and attempts prove abortive ; does he meet with disappointments and afflictions : it is God, in whom he trusts, to whom he resigns his fate ; from whom he expects consolation and help. Thus does he walk before God, as holy scripture speaks ; and all that he sees and hears, all that happens to himself and to others, gives him, as a friend and lover of God, occasion and incentive to think on that first and best of beings, and to lift up his heart to him in silent devotion.

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The delight with which the good man attends on public as well as private worship, is the second particular whereby his love to God appears and shews itself active and vegete. How fain are we to converse with our friends! How do we long for their company, when we have been deprived of it for a length of time! What a sensible pleasure when we can unreservedly open our heart in their presence; when we can lay before them our most secret thoughts and designs for discussion; when we can share with them our joys and our sorrows! And shall the man who loves God have less pleasure in converse with him? But how can we otherwise converse with that exalted being, than by making him the subject of our thoughts and meditations; than by hearing and reading his word; than by praying to him, and by offering to him both in the assembly of the saints and in the retirement of the closet, the sacrifice of praise and gratitude which is so justly his due? Occupations which the lover of God not only finds not troublesome, but grateful and pleasant. He prefers these exercises of religion to all sensual gratifications, and only then is truly happy, when he draws nigh to God and holds communion with him. How refreshing to him, when, retired from the bustle of temporal affairs and distractions, he contemplates the infinite attributes, the wise and benignant ways and works of the Highest, when he considers the endearing

dearing relations in which he is placed to his creator and father, to his benefactor and redeemer; when he muses on such instances of his favour and love as he has already received, and what glorious demonstrations of it he has yet in futurity to expect; when absorbed in admiration and gratitude, he prostrates himself in adoration before him who liveth for ever and ever! What a sacred transport fills his soul, when with the ingenuousness of a child he can approach the throne of grace, pour out his heart before God, cast all his cares upon him, rely upon his favour, and obtain, from the divine sufficiency, fresh supplies of strength for overcoming evil, of power for the discharge of duty, of fortitude for enduring affliction! How agreeable to him when he can go with the faithful to the house of God, when he can unite with them, when he can praise the majesty of heaven with them, as it were with one mouth, and may regard himself already as a blessed member of that company of the perfected just, who are incessantly praising the Highest with united and unremitting fervour. He comes, as the psalmist speaks, before his presence with thanksgiving, and shews himself glad in him with psalms. One day, one hour, that he passes in his courts, is of more value to him than a thousand elsewhere. To conclude, what a pleasure to him it is to hear the word of the Lord, or to read it for himself with a quiet mind! Here he finds
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more light, more wisdom, more force, more consolation, than in all, even the most excellent, human compositions. Here he listens to the voice of his sovereign ruler and lord, his most affectionate father and friend, and studies his thoughts, his designs, and his will. Consequently the laws and statutes of the Most High must be dearer to him than thousands of gold and silver, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.

An enlightened and active zeal for the honour and glory of God is the third particular, whereby the love to God is manifested and effectively displayed. Are we indifferent, pious hearers, when our friend is slandered, when his reputation is attacked, when he is accused of crimes which he never committed, when his best actions are vilified, and represented as vices in disguise? Or do we hear it without a sensible pleasure, when people do justice to his integrity, acknowledge his qualifications and merits, shew him a becoming respect, and bestow encomiums on his character? How much interest do we take in both cases in whatever concerns him! How careful are we to exculpate and to justify him, when he is falsely accused by envy or malice; and how great is our satisfaction, when he is honoured and esteemed by others! But shall not the man who sincerely loves God be so disposed toward the object of his affection? Shall he remain indifferent and cold, when the ways and works of the Highest are censured

censured with petulance and presumption, when his holy name is insulted and blasphemed, when his ordinances are derided and profaned? Shall he not be deeply concerned, when he sees men walking their own ways, following their depraved appetites, wandering farther and farther from God, and obstinately refusing him the obedience he may so justly demand? Shall it not on the other hand fill him with sincere delight, when he becomes acquainted with some worthy worshiper of God; when he is a witness to his elevated sentiments, his just and beneficent actions; when he is assured that he exerts himself in extending the dominion of truth, of virtue, and the fear of God among mortals! Yes, my friends, nothing troubles the good man more than to see men ignorant and vicious, the enemies and despisers of God; and he can say with the psalmist: My eyes gush out with water, because men keep not thy law. Nothing grieves him more than the consideration, that still so many nations are living in darkness, idolatry, and superstition, knowing neither God nor his great representative Jesus Christ. Nothing causes him, on the other hand, more lively joy, than when he hears that such a sinner is reformed, that such an one who had fallen is recovered, that true religion is making conquests on the globe. And how earnestly does he desire that the kingdom of God may come, that all the world may fear the Lord, that all the nations may bow
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down before him, and that his name may be proclaimed and honoured to the uttermost ends of the earth! How careful is he at the same time, by all his words and works, by affectionate admonition, by serious reproof, by encouraging example, to contribute as much as possible in promoting that end; and how delighted is he, when, through the divine blessing his endeavours are not wholly in vain!

A constant and earnest endeavour to please God by a willing and unrestricted obedience to his commands, is the fourth particular, whereby the love to God is displayed and shewn to be effective. This, in fact, constitutes the most essential part of it. It is the principal and peculiar conception of that great obligation given us in the sacred writings. It is likewise grounded in the very nature of sincere affection, and cannot be separated from it. Do we not sedulously abstain from whatever may give umbrage to the friend whom we tenderly love? Do we not take the utmost pains to acquire his approbation, to give him a good opinion of us, or always more to confirm him in it? Do we make any account of the trouble it may cost us to avoid doing that which we know to be his utter aversion? Does it seem hard to do whatever will particularly please him? Or, have we any right to boast of a tender affection for him while we pursue a different conduct? How think you then, my pious hearers, can we

love God, unless we be thus affected towards him? Are we not guilty of gross inconsistency, if we pretend to be his friends, and yet wilfully transgress his commandments, and are the servants of vice and sin? Are we ignorant, that the holy God regards iniquity with the utmost abhorrence, and is the enemy of the evil-doer? Do we not know, that he loves order and truth above all things, that he has the greatest delight in virtue, and that the practice of it is the only method of acquiring his favour? Does he not thus address us himself by his servants: O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth. No; he that loves God from his heart, readily hearkens to his will, and does his will with joy. Since he holds his favour to be better than life, since he desires nothing more ardently than to render himself agreeable to the sovereign being, and since he knows that it is impossible to please him without bearing his image, and in his fear perfecting holiness, he therefore makes that his leading concern. In his determinations and actions he consults neither the lusts of the flesh, nor his temporal interest, nor the corrupt principles and customs of the world, but solely the good and perfect will of his God. This he makes the regulating principle of his whole beha-

behaviour. This he examines daily, to try whether he may not have sinned against it through ignorance. What is at variance with it, that he hates, that he shuns and avoids with detestation and abhorrence. What is consonant to it, that he seeks, that he loves and does, cost what labour, what pains, what self-denial it may. In short, he is more afraid of offending his heavenly father, and forfeiting his complacency, than of bringing on himself the hatred and enmity of the mightiest of the earth ; and it is of infinitely more consequence to him to approve himself to the Most High, than to acquire the esteem and applause of the world.

The love of God must fifthly manifest itself by a sincere and effective love of our neighbour. True love is always busy. It is active, and rejoices whenever it can be instrumental to the benefit of the person to whom it is devoted. We make it a pleasure, by all possible means to promote the happiness of our friend. If we cannot do good to himself, because he is more powerful than we, and stands in no need of our assistance; yet are we ready to do it to such as belong to him, as are connected with him, as are dear and precious in his sight. His recommendation of any one to us will not be in vain ; and a distant hint from him is already sufficient to move us to the most zealous prosecution of his views. Apply this to the devout lover of God, and you will

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discern a new feature of his character, a new effect of his love. God is infinitely superior to all necessities. He is in himself unalterably and supremely happy. We cannot augment his perfection, nor give him anything which he has not first given us. But he has rational creatures who bear his likeness, he has children, he has friends and subjects here on earth, whom we may effectually serve, to whom we may be useful in various ways, whose temporal and eternal prosperity we may promote. These he recommends to our love, to our care, to our relief. To these we are to do, what we cannot do to him, who is all-sufficient. In his extreme condescension, he will so regard the benefits we confer on them, as if we had bestowed them on him, Shall such recommendations make no impression on us? Shall we not rejoice when we have the means and the opportunity to act in correspondence with them? Or can we neglect them, without forfeiting all pretensions to love towards God, and declaring ourselves in fact his enemies? By no means. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he, who loveth God, love his brother also. But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his

his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

Lastly, the love to God displays itself in sincere aspirings after heaven, where we shall be more intimately united with him, and partake of his good-pleasure in a superior degree. What is more natural, than to lament our distance from the friend of our heart, and to desire his continual presence? What more sensibly affects us than when our fortunes divide us asunder, or when our avocations and mode of life will not allow us to be so often together as we earnestly wish? The good man, my pious hearers, who loves God above all, finds himself in similar circumstances here on earth. Though he already knows that God is not far from every one of us; that access to the throne of grace stands ever open to him; that even in this life he has fellowship with the father, and with his son Jesus Christ: yet he here walks by faith and not by sight. His conception of God is still very inadequate: his virtue is extremely defective and imperfect; his piety and joy are still liable to many hazards and vicissitudes. The bands that hold him to the earth prevent him very often from approaching the deity, and from employing himself in spiritual and heavenly concerns. How cruelly must these ties at times oppress him! What an ardent desire must these considerations kindle in him, to be freed from them and to be translated into a more perfect state of being!

being! Yes, my friends, when the religious man fixes his attention on the infinite glory and amiableness of God; when he compares with it the inferior degree of his love to him; reflects how many, for the most part insurmountable obstructions, the businesses, the cares, the temptations of this world and bodily infirmities throw in his way, against his maintaining a closer intercourse with that blessed being: he elevates himself in mind above all that is earthly. All his aspirations are directed to heaven, the abode of the purest and most perfect love. He wishes soon to be admitted to his father's house; and, inspired with sacred fervour, he exclaims, My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God! When will the day arrive, when I shall more fully know that first, best, greatest of all beings, more justly apprehend his exalted attributes, and perceive the beauty, the perfection, the wisdom and goodness of his ways and works in a clearer light? When shall I be so happy as completely to be freed from sin, which so often debars me from God, and hides from me his gracious countenance, and be able to serve him without distraction, without lassitude, without infirmity? When will it be granted me, to enjoy undisturbed the blessed effects of his favour and affection, and to love him in return purely and perfectly, without diminution or change!

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These, pious hearers, are the principal sentiments and actions by which the love of God is manifested, and in which it chiefly consists. They are all most strictly associated, and no one can subsist without the rest. They are all of them grounded in the nature of things, and must be found, at least in their elements and essence, in every good man's breast. Do we then, pious hearers, find within us these godly sentiments and feelings? Are we experimentally acquainted with them? And does our heart bear us the consoling testimony, that we think and act like the lover of God, whose character we have been considering? Is it become quite habitual to us, on all occasions to turn our thoughts to God, and to observe his hand and will in all things? Is it a real delight to serve him both in public and in private, to adore him, to converse with him, and to inform ourselves of the purport of his divine revelations? Does it grieve us, when the honour of God and of religion is insulted and obscured? Do we rejoice, when the name of the Highest is glorified, and his kingdom enlarged among mankind; and are we fain to contribute as much as we can to that end? Is nothing more interesting to us than the desire of pleasing God, and do we evince it by the conscientious care with which we strive to fulfill his commands? Do we love our neighbour for the sake of God and from our love to him, and is it our pleasure to do good to others,
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and also in that respect to resemble our heavenly father as his dutiful children? Do we, in the last place, frequently direct our eyes to the future world, and do we long, not from disgust, not from discontent, but from an ardent desire of becoming more holy and more perfect, after the blissful mansions of the just? O my friends, when I reflect what a general coldness towards God and divine concerns prevails, how indifferent most men are to whatever relates to religion and piety, how seldom they employ themselves in such reflections, how little pleasure they take in such matters, and how often they entirely lose sight of God, his commandments, his benefactions and his will; when I consider what numbers either neglect altogether both public and private worship, or perform them, not with delight, but entirely from custom and constraint, and how many are in a manner ashamed of devotional exercises, which however compose so important and so essential a part of worship; when I revolve in my mind how many hearts are totally possessed by that servile love of the world and vanity,* which is in direct opposition to the love of God, and are so fascinated by it, that all their imaginations and endeavours, all their desires and aims, are directed solely to terrestrial and transitory goods and preferments, solely to sensual pleasures and amusements; when I think how much we are in general more afraid of affronting the world than

than the Majesty of heaven, and how much greater pains we take to please mankind than him : when I ponder all this, my very soul is troubled, on seeing that God, who so much merits our tenderest affection, is only loved of a few, and of these few not so ardently and zealously as it is reasonable he should be ; on seeing that still many of us are enemies and despisers of God, who is so benign, so merciful, so bountiful to us, and without whom we cannot be happy. Oh, my friends, let these considerations fill you with confusion ; let them awaken you to reflection, to self-examination, to humiliation before God, to a poignant remorse for your trespasses, to an immediate and serious conversion. Deplore your sad forgetfulness of God, the father of light and life. Form lively apprehensions of the lamentable consequences of it, and impress it deeply on your mind, that without God and communion with him, nothing but misery and ruin is to be expected. No longer shut your hearts against him. They are his, and he demands them of you as his own. Consecrate to him your desires and affections. He alone is completely worthy of them. He alone can satisfy and fulfill them. Let us all, pious hearers, seek our honour and our happiness in the love of God. When once that celestial flame is kindled in our souls, let us cherish it with all possible care. Never may it be quenched or abated by the love of the world and sin ! May it ever
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receive new force and vigour from our prayers, our devotions, our fervour in piety and virtue! Happy for us if we follow these precepts! God will then fulfill in us that promise which comprises in it all that is precious and covetable: I love them that love me; and they that seek me diligently shall find me.

SERMON XXXI.

Of loving God.



GOD, thou in thy very self art love ! There is nothing that both nature and religion proclaim with a louder and more intelligible voice than this; this we are told by our own susceptible and apprehensive heart, desiring or reaching out after agreeable objects, and knowing the felicity of love. This heart thou hast formed and endued with the faculty of enjoying that felicity. Yes, benevolence and beneficence essentially belong to thee. With parental benevolence thou lookest down on all thy creatures, all thy children, on the lowest and least as on the most exalted and great, on the wicked as on the good ; thou lovest them all, providest for all, dost good to all, and wilt everlastingly do good to all. Thou hast destined them all to happiness, and guidest them all to their destination. Good and evil, afflictions and joys, abundance and want, reward and punishment, blessings and chastisements, whatever proceeds from thee, All-gracious, is bounty, is means and way

way to higher perfection. Yes, light and life and energy and joy and felicity incessantly flow down from thee upon the whole of thy immense creation. — And how manifold, how great are the benefits which we, All-bountiful, have already received from thee, and are still constantly receiving! What are we, what have we, what are we able to do, that is not a largess of thy bounty! What wants of our mind and our body does not thy goodness supply! What satisfactions, what accommodations, what pleasures and delights, does it grant us in so many respects to enjoy! What support it affords to our weakness! How indulgently it bears with us when we transgress and fail in our duty! How affectionately does it bring us back from our deviations! What sources of satisfaction and force does it daily open to us in nature and in religion! How wisely it guides our destinies, often denying us the accomplishment of many pernicious, foolish desires, granting and occasioning us so much good, that we neither apprehended nor sought, and causing all ultimately to tend to our advantage! — Yes, o God, thou art and wilt eternally be love! We feel ourselves surrounded by thy bounty as by thy air, as by thy light! We feel that to bless and to do good is thy sole, thy everlasting employment! May nothing, nothing ever make us relinquish this sublime, this comfortable truth; but may we be quickened by it with the fullness of our faculties to make the
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just return of love and gratitude to thee, our heavenly father! — And oh do thou, the author and giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our lord, who knowing both our necessities and our infirmities, graciously condescended to instruct us how acceptably to pray unto thee. Our father, &c.

MATTHEW XXii. 37, 38.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

LAST week we shewed you, my devout audience, wherein that love to God, which the saviour of the world recommends to us in our text, principally consists, and by what pious sentiments and actions it chiefly and effectively appears. We have seen that the lover of God frequently and with alacrity and on all occasions, thinks of him; that he observes all the duties of public as well as private devotion with satisfaction and delight; that he is animated by an enlightened and active zeal for the honour and glory of God, for the extension of true religion and virtue; that he has nothing more at heart than to render himself agreeable to the supreme being by a strict obedience to all his commands; that he takes pleasure

sure in beneficence, and heartily contributes all he can to the happiness of his brethren, who are the creatures, the children and subjects of God, because God has expressly recommended them to his care and assistance: and that lastly he longs for heaven, for the state of perfection, where he shall be more closely united with God, where he shall know him better, serve him with more purity and zeal, and enjoy the blessed effects of his good pleasure in a higher degree. By these characteristics we exhorted you to examine your hearts and your conduct, and it is our earnest wish that this examination may produce in you abundant fruits of repentance and amendment! We are now, my pious hearers, by the divine assistance and blessing, to discuss somewhat at large the two remaining divisions of our design. The former relates to the properties which our love to God should have for being of the genuine species; the other comprehends the chain of arguments which bind us to it. What a happiness will it be for you and for me, if it be granted me to shew you these arguments in their real nature and their whole cogency, and if you be sensible to the force of them, and thence be induced to love God above all!

Our redeemer himself acquaints us of the properties that our love to God should have for being of the proper kind, when he says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with
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all thy soul, with all thy mind, and, as Mark subjoins, with all thy strength. These accumulated expressions, which apparently denote the self-same thing, serve generally to shew the sincerity no less than the force and degree of the love which we owe to God. They give us to understand, an undissembled, an ardent, an effective and a constant love, captivating as it were the entire soul, setting all its capacities and energies in motion, and becoming a ruling affection. We must however take great care, my devout audience, not to push the meaning of these terms too far, lest we confirm the infidel and the sinner in the mischievous error, that God in his laws requires impossibilities of mankind. Would it not indeed be a thing impossible, and contrary to the nature of man, to require that he should think on nothing else but God; that he should constantly fix all his attention on the supreme being; that he should be incessantly employed in contemplating his perfection and glory, and to this end neglect all other occupations and concerns? Would it not be a thing impossible and contrary to the nature of man, to make it his duty to wish and to desire nothing at all but God, to love nothing at all beside him, and to be indifferent and insensible towards every other object, how good, how useful soever it might be? Certainly this is not what our wise and benign legislator demands of us, in ordering us to love him with all our heart,

heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. This would be far above our ability, and manifestly at variance with the designs of our creator. He has himself constituted our nature as it actually is. But what is more natural to us, than to love ourselves; than to esteem and desire to a certain degree whatever has a tendency to promote our welfare; than to relish the enjoyment of the conveniences and advantages of life, and to contemplate the beauty and excellence of the divine works with pleasure, and to rejoice in them? Yes, has not the Lord expressly commanded us to love our neighbour; and what can be more consonant to the will of the God of holiness, than for us to make order, truth, virtue and moral good, every shadow of the divine resemblance wherever we find it, the objects of our esteem and affection? But I tarry too long in confuting an error which is so contrary to every principle both of reason and revelation, and in direct opposition to all our feelings. We have already said, that the expression to love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our strength, denotes an unfeigned, a strong, a predominant and constant love. And these are the main properties our love to God should have, that it may be of the proper kind.

It should first be sincere. It should be founded upon a just knowledge and a lively apprehension of the venerable and amiable attributes of the deity.

deity. The words and actions, by which we express and display it should exactly correspond with the sentiments and affections of our heart. Without this correspondence, whatever we say and do in testimony of our love to God is hypocrisy, and must necessarily displease the Omniscient, who sees in secret. Nay, without this correspondence of heart and outward deportment, no real love is possible at all. A love that does not move and affect the heart, which leaves it insensible and cold, which consists merely in reverential grimace, in courteous expressions, in adulatory encomiums, in a few unmeaning compliments, is manifest inconsistency. Least of all does it deserve the name of love, when it has the sovereign being for its object. God is a spirit; and they that adore him, that worship him, that serve him, that love him, must do so in spirit and in truth.

We should secondly love God above, or more than all beside, if we would conform to the precept in our text. Nothing should be more estimable, more dear, more desirable in our eyes, than the grace, the favour, and the good pleasure of the Highest. Nothing should be of greater moment to us than the obtaining or the securing of it. This should be the ultimate aim of all our wishes, of all our efforts and actions. The greatest earthly interests, the most ravishing sensual pleasures, should appear to us prejudicial

and contemptible; we should renounce and reject them without hesitation, if they obstruct us in this exalted pursuit. No difficulties, no privations, no obstacles, should deter us from prosecuting our career to that pearl of great price, or fatigue us in it. The will of God should make more impression on us than all the threats and promises of the world; and we should hearken to him in all cases, even in the most perilous circumstances, rather than to men, however mighty and terrific they may be. When we have to chuse between God and the world, between the good pleasure of the Eternal; and the approbation of mortals, we are not to pause a moment in resolving which to prefer. No sacrifice should be too expensive, or too precious, for us to make a free-will offering to God and to religion, when they require it of us. Nay we should be ready to relinquish and surrender whatever is even most dear and delightful to us here on earth, if we may not preserve it without incurring the displeasure of the supreme being, or exposing us to the danger of losing his favour.. This is what our saviour demands of us, in saying: He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. —

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Would we love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind; we should thirdly love all else that merits our esteem and our affection, principally with regard and in reference to God as the author of it. We may, no doubt, esteem and desire the accommodations and emoluments of the world to a certain degree, and enjoy them with due moderation. We may delight ourselves with the beautiful and good that is in nature, and open our hearts to the innocent cheerfulness which the view and enjoyment of them naturally inspire. But we should consider them as presents from the Most High, as testimonies of his love, and allow ourselves to be moved by them to proper acknowledgements and grateful returns of love. Never should we rest in the creatures, but elevate our thoughts to the creator, to whose bounty and loving-kindness all his works bear witness. We should strive to turn all to his honour and glory; that is, we should so use them as is conformable to his wise designs and his holy will, and so frame our whole behaviour, that others may thence be edified, and moved to praise our father in heaven. Thus can the love we bear to ourselves and others, and the relish we find in the goods of the world, cause no abatement of our love to God. On the contrary the one will still more excite us to the other, will be constantly supplying it with fresh nourishment,

and all our affections will be united in God as their common centre.

Would we, lastly, love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind ; our love to him must be constant and unalterable. It must become our predominant affection. It must appear at all times and on all occasions. It must be the regulating principle of our whole deportment. Vainly does he boast of loving God above all things, who one while holds God and his grace, one while the world and its glory, his sovereign good ; who to-day makes heaven the object of his desires, and to-morrow the earth ; who now follows the dictates of religion and virtue, and now the commands of his unbridled lusts and affections. Vainly does he boast of loving God with all his heart, who only does so when all goes well with him, when heaven prospers all his undertakings, and showers down benefits on his head ; but who cools in his devotion and zeal when afflictions come upon him, or murmurs against God, and complains of his providence, when he somewhat contracts his liberality, and requires stronger proofs of his resignation and obedience. No ; the religious man's love to God is of a quite different nature. Though it be not alike lively at all times, alike fervid and active ; though its ardour may be occasionally somewhat relaxed by infirmities and failings ; yet it constantly

stantly retains the mastery in his soul. He finds God no less venerable and amiable, when as a father he chastens his children, than when he pours upon them temporal blessings. He rejoices in both cases that he stands under the overruling agency of his providence ; and his expectation in boundless futurity never suffers his love to abate. To borrow the expression of Solomon, it is strong as death, its jealousy is unrelenting as the grave ; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

These, pious hearers, are the leading properties our love to God should have, for rendering it agreeable to the precept we find in our text. Let us now examine the arguments which oblige us to such a love to God. Love is founded on the excellency of its object ; or on the intimate relations we bear to it ; or on the benefits which we receive from it ; or on the good we have to hope for from it. With regard to our love for God, all these reasons unite and coalesce ; and who does not perceive how strong, how indissoluble they render our obligation to it ?

Where is the being that is more excellent, more venerable, more amiable than God ? Does he not comprise in himself whatever is beautiful, whatever is good, whatever is perfect ? Is he not the origin and source of all the particular beauties and perfections that are dispersed throughout the universe ? Yes ; of him and through him and to him

him are all things : to whom be glory for ever ! How little, how mean, are all the excellencies, all the good qualities, of the best, the noblest of mortals, when compared with the prerogatives and attributes of the Infinite ! They vanish from our sight, as the moon and stars before the splendour of the rising sun. All that is great and amiable unite in God. He possesses all that merits admiration, esteem, and desire ; and he possesses it in the superlative degree. Is it a power extremely diffusive but harmless and beneficent, that moves your soul, and fills you with admiring awe ? God is the Almighty, who does what he pleases both in heaven and on earth. If he speak, it is done ; if he command, it stands fast. His dominion is everlasting, and his kingdom has no end. He rules over all ; he controuls and governs all by his good pleasure. You need not fear that he should ever misapply his power. He directs it constantly by the eternal and immutable rules of justice and equity ; it covers, it protects the godly in the time of need, and is only terrible to impenitent sinners. Is it understanding and wisdom, that excite your esteem and reverence ? God is the Only-wise. He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Do not heaven and earth bear witness ; do not all the creatures, both great and small, bear witness, the living and the lifeless ; do not our body and our soul most expressly bear witness that the Lord has ordered

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dered his works in wisdom? And what are all the scattered rays of intellect, of reason and sagacity, which in such various degrees are distributed among the several species and classes of rational beings; what are they but emanations from this pure, eternal, uncreated source of intellectual light and life? Is it virtue, is it holiness and justice that you revere as the most essential prerogatives, that you hold the worthiest object of your affections? God, my friends, is a light, in which there is no darkness at all; he is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works. Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; mercy and truth are ever before him. The most exalted spirits fall prostrate at the splendor of his perfect holiness; they cover their faces and exclaim: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, the earth is full of thy glory! Is it, in short, benignity and compassion, is it affectionate and magnanimous sentiments and actions, that charm you, that entirely captivate your heart, that move you with a mild but irresistible force to the most reverential love? God is love. He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. From his throne the full unfailing stream of life, of joy and happiness, flows down on all his creatures; and his disposition to beneficence is large as our amplest wish, and lasting as our immortal souls.

A being

A being, my friends, that possesses such attributes, such perfections, surely deserves our profoundest veneration, our most ardent love. Must we not be insensible to all that is beautiful, that is good, that is excellent, if we do not love God, in whom all these unite ; if we do not burst forth in the language of the psalmist : Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee !

Proceed in your meditations, pious hearers, and consider the close relations wherein you stand to God ; and the multitude, the magnitude, the transcendent worth, of the benefits you have received from him. He is our creator ; we are the work of his hands. He is our sovereign ; and we are his subjects. He is our father ; and we his children. Can we be allied to him in stricter bands than these ? Can anything shew a juster claim to all the affections of our heart, than these natural and indissoluble relations shew ? And is he not the kindest, the most bountiful master, the tenderest and most affectionate father that our imaginations can conceive ? Is it not him to whom we are beholden for life and breath, to whom we owe all the capacities, all the faculties, all the privileges, that ennoble our nature, and exalt us so far above the brute creation ? Is it not he who constantly preserves and provides for us, from whom every good and perfect gift proceeds, who daily opens his hand and fills every living

living thing with good? Is it not him to whom we are obliged for all that can any way render our abode on earth convenient and agreeable; he who has given the heavens their splendor, the sun its light, the earth its abundance, the plants their beauties and virtues, the animals their fitness for our use, and to men their inventive industry? Is it not he who spares us so often when we deserve punishment, who bears with us to the extreme of forbearance, and is ever granting us fresh respite for repentance and amendment? And how frequently has he given us particular proofs of his protection in danger, of his help in distress, of his strength in our weakness! Who of us has not experienced, that he is nigh unto such as call upon him, that he hears supplication and prayer, and that none was ever put to confusion that trusted in him? And what terms shall I employ to express the unmerited and inestimable manifestations of grace he has made to us all as sinners? Where is there a master who has dealt so with his servants, a father with his children, as God has dealt with us, while we were yet his foes? For our sakes he spared not the son of his love; he sent him to us, to be our teacher, our mediator, our redeemer; for us he gave him up to death, an ignominious and a painful death. He has caused the life of the spirit, his grace, the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to be proclaimed and offered to us. So soon as we turn to him

him in penitential faith, so soon as we forsake the way of iniquity and ruin, so soon as we convert ourselves to him with all our heart; he will have mercy upon us, remember our iniquities no more, and vouchsafe us his favour: we shall again have free access to him, and be happy in communion with him. He himself will support us in our weakness, assist us with his spirit in the work of our sanctification, and bear with the imperfection of our obedience, if it be but sincere. Never will he allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear; and under his inspection and conduct we shall hereafter infallibly gain possession of the glorious inheritance he has prepared for us in heaven. How great, how inexpressibly transcendent are all these benefits and blessings, pious hearers! How far above all our merits, and beyond our expectations! What can charm us to gratitude and love, if these considerations cannot? Yes, o God, thou art perfectly, thou art alone worthy that we should love thee with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our powers. To thee belongs our heart, all our affections belong to thee; and we should be the most ungrateful, the basest of all thy creatures, if we loved not thee, who hast first so much loved us.

Although, from these arguments, you cannot deny your obligation to love God, pious hearers, still however add the intrinsic excellency and the manifold utility of this virtue. A consideration that

that will yield a new degree of force to these arguments. What can more delightfully employ the soul of a reasonable and virtuous being; what is more adapted to elevate and enlarge his capacities and powers; what can procure him a more pure, a more noble, a more sensible pleasure, than the love of a God who possesses all the prerogatives and attributes which only merit love in the supreme degree, without limitation and vicissitude; who is the everflowing and inexhaustible fountain of light, of life, of joy, of happiness; whose goodness and grace continue for ever and ever; and who will never cease to bless his friends and worshipers, and to render them happy? Oh blessed hours that are passed by the devout in contemplating the perfection of their God, in his temple, in his service, in his intercourse! Oh, heavenly transports which they feel, when, assured of the divine complacency, they draw nigh to the sovereign ruler of the world, and hold converse with him! Who has ever enjoyed these delights without giving them the highest preference above all others? In the enjoyment of them, who has ever felt that void and languor which usually attend all sensual and earthly transports?

What farther is more adapted to facilitate to us the practice of all the virtues, the discharge of all our duties, than the love of God? Love is one of the strongest and most active sensations. It finds nothing impracticable, nothing difficult, that tends to

to the prosecution of its designs. It boldly encounters every obstacle and difficulty ; and overcomes them all, if they be not insurmountable in their nature. And shall the love of God be less effective ? No, if it have once possession of our soul, if it preside and govern in it ; then shall we truly and experimentally say with the apostle : His commandments are not grievous. It will be a pleasure to do what is right. We shall be more than conquerors in all things, through him that loved us. The motives to goodness will never fail us ; and these motives will far more forcibly act upon us than all human laws, than habit and honour. They will never leave us undecided or doubtful, how we should behave in this or the other event. Animated by their energy, we shall joyfully comply with our duty at all times, in all places, in all circumstances, and towards all mankind. We shall be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Yet more. Is it not the love of God which stamps upon our piety and virtue their greatest value, and converts them into an offering in the sight of the Lord, which is acceptable and well-pleasing to him ? We will not indeed pronounce him vicious, who eschews evil and does good rather from fear of punishment than from love to God ; who in the performance of his duty looks more to himself and his present and future interest, than to God and his will. No ; he is in the way

way of virtue; and the longer he pursues it, the more pleasant will he find it, and the more will his sentiments be refined and exalted. But as great as the difference is between children and servants, so much is the privilege of the devout man, whose heart is entirely devoted to God, and who obeys him with pleasure and joy, above his who forbears to transgress the divine commands, rather because he cannot escape with impunity, than because they are the commands of the most adorable and most amiable being. And may not the former promise himself a far higher degree of the divine complacency than the other can pretend to? Shall not the former be capable of a far superior bliss in the future world?

What finally is more adapted, my pious hearers, to comfort us in all adversities, to render us firm and undaunted in every danger, and to give us the most certain hope of the completest happiness, than love towards God? When can we be wanting in consolation, in support and assistance, in what circumstances can we fail of being happy, if we be in union with God, the sovereign good, if we belong to the number of his friends? How glorious are the promises held out to us in this respect! The Lord, says the psalmist, preserveth all them that love him, I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. To them that love God, the apostle affirms, all things shall work together for good.

good. That which no eye has seen, which no ear has heard, which no human heart is able to conceive, has God prepared for them that love him. The heavens stand always open to them, and they will lay hold on the crown of life, which God has promised to them that love him.

Ye sinners, who have hitherto been indifferent and insensible towards God, you who refuse him your heart and your love, see against what sacred obligations you have been acting, what signal advantages and felicities you have hitherto missed. Ought you not to be ashamed of such an unjust and unnatural conduct? Should not this destitution grieve you? Can the world, can sin compensate you for it? Can they afford you the real, the lasting satisfaction you look for in them? Oh be no longer deluded! Hasten by an actual repentance and conversion, to the God whom you have forsaken. Lament, that you have so long denied him your love, which he alone deserves; that you have lavished it on things that are not worthy of it. Consecrate your heart to him, with all its appetites and affections. Diligently employ all the means of producing and exciting this love towards God. And what are those means? An attentive consideration of the amiable attributes of God, a continued meditation on his manifold and inestimable bounties. Love should be founded on a knowledge of the eminent qualities of its object; it should see them in a vivid and

and affecting light ; it should compare them with others, less good, less beautiful, less perfect. Strive therefore to acquire a proper apprehension of God. Attend to the information he gives us of himself, both in nature and in his word. Seek to form just, worthy, grand conceptions of him and his attributes. Never represent him to you under the horrible image of an austere and inexorable despot, more ambitious to display his unbounded authority and power, than to act with wisdom, with justice and beneficence ; whose administration is conducted, not upon rational principles and views, but by tyrannical caprice ; who distributes prosperity and adversity amongst his subjects, without any regard to their behaviour. This notion, which both reason and scripture disclaim, would not beget love, but a slavish fear. Consider God as he actually is, as a being who possesses not only sovereign might, but also the most consummate wisdom, the purest sanctity and justice, and infinite benignity, condescension and mercy. Contemplate the manifold and glorious demonstrations of it in the creation, in providence, in redemption. Set against them the greatest prerogatives of the wisest and holiest, the best of all men ; and conclude from the contrast how much God is more deserving of our love, than all that here on earth has the justest title to it. Strive farther to excite your gratitude to this sovereign being. Call to mind the multitude,
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the magnitude, the eminent value of the benefits you daily and hourly receive from God; and at the same time recollect your own unworthiness, your sins and failings, whereby you have so often offended your kindest benefactor; and the infinite interval between God and you. Frequently revolve in your mind, how vain and evanescent are all the possessions and honours of the world; and how insufficient to give you peace, to satiate your vast desires, and to render you truly happy. Let the public as well as the private exercises of religion and worship be among your chief concerns; and never neglect them without the weightiest reasons. If you pursue these meditations, these exercises with becoming attention; if you frequently reiterate them; if you accompany them with humble and earnest prayer for the divine benediction: they will assuredly make a salutary impression on your heart; they will kindle in it the flame of heavenly love, and continually procure it fresh supplies of nourishment.

You know, ye sincere and upright lovers of your God, how well these means are calculated to awaken and to support that love. It behoves you well to take heed that you never become slothful and indolent in the use of these means. You know how happy he is, in whom the love of God abides. Strive to preserve that happiness with all possible assiduity and care, strive still to enjoy it in a superior degree. Beware chiefly of sin, which
always

always alienates you from God, and weakens the sentiment of his blessed complacency. Are you still constrained to sigh over various infirmities, many imperfections and errors ; let it not fill you with despondence. Rather redouble your ardour in goodness, and solace yourselves with the hope of that blessed state, where you will see your maker face to face, where you will more worthily love him ; where you will be perfectly happy in the undisturbed enjoyment of his love. May he, the God of everlasting mercy, make us all partakers of that transporting bliss ! To him be glory and adoration for ever ! Amen.

SERMON XXXII.

*The comfortable Declaration of Jesus concerning
the future Life.*

GOD, that thou hast elevated us, fragile, mortal beings, to the hope of immortality, that by thy son Jesus thou hast opened and plained for us the way to a better, a superior life after death, that thou hast already resuscitated and exalted us with him, and made us partakers of the heavenly calling by the most authentic assurance of it : in this we here publicly rejoice in thy presence, for this we thank thee with united hearts.^x No ; here we have no abiding city, here we are strangers and sojourners, descry our real country, the place of our destination, only from afar, and sometimes even — clouds and thick darkness entirely eclipse that consoling prospect. But not for ever, not long shall this state of probation and discipline endure : soon shall it give place to the state of retribution and fruition. Death shall conduct us to life, to the superior better life. With thee thou
hast

hast prepared for us mansions which are not transitory, not made with hands, which are everlasting, and promising us everlasting joy and happiness. There, where Jesus, our chieftain and guide, is gone before, there shall we be also, there shall all thy children meet, and in the house of their heavenly father become everlastingly more perfect and happy. Accept the grateful homage of our thanks which we humbly offer up to thee, for this exalted hope, most merciful father. Oh grant that we may thoroughly perceive and feel its inestimable worth, and derive from it much comfort and courage and force and joy, for the prosecution and completion of our pilgrimage! Deign to bless in this design our reflections on that consoling doctrine, and hear our prayer, for the sake of him, who gave his life for the happiness of the world, thy son, Jesus. Our father, &c.

JOHN XIV. 2.

In my father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.

NOTHING can be more affecting to a sensible heart, than the last discourses of Jesus with his disciples, and at the same time nothing sets the excellence and dignity of his character in a fairer point of view. Who can fail of discerning here the accents of the most cordial and tender affection, unmindful of its own concerns and sacrificing itself to others; who hears not here the

voice of truth, of integrity, of simplicity and of sincerity ; who can here allege the most distant suspicion of self-interested, sordid, or ambitious motives against Jesus ; who can read these his conversations, without taking the most heartfelt interest in all that he says and whatever befalls him ; oh ! such a man I should pity as one to whom the best affections of our nature were become perfect strangers, whom prejudice or passion had rendered callous to every finer feeling of the true, the beautiful and the good ! Read these sayings of Jesus, my pious hearers, read them with a calm and attentive mind ; read them as the last conversations of a tutor with his pupils, of a friend with his friends, and thus put your heart to the proof, and rejoice if it be intimately moved by them and entirely penetrated with esteem and affection for Jesus. We must, however, at this time, confine ourselves to a small portion of these speeches of our lord ; to the comfortable description he gives them of that state of felicity, which awaits him and them in a better world, in the mansions of his and their heavenly father, and to the ingenuous and candid manner in which he assures them of it. In my father's house, says he, are many mansions, room enough for you and for all my faithful followers : if it were not so, if the case were otherwise, if ye were to seek your principal, your entire happiness on earth and not in heaven, I would have directly told you so, would never

never have deluded you with empty hopes. Let us, my dear friends, enter upon a closer examination of the important and comfortable doctrine contained in this declaration of Jesus, and thereby confirm our faith in him and our future destination.

After death another, a better life awaits us ; that life holds forth to every pious and religious person all the perfection and happiness he is capable of, and which is proper for him : it leads us to Jesus, our chieftain and lord, and brings us near to his and our heavenly father, the supreme deity : and the hope of that life is our best consolation under all the privations that we here may suffer. These are the four leading doctrines contained in the words of our text, and may yield us as much comfort and encouragement as they formerly must have done to the disciples of our lord. Let us illustrate, and apply them to ourselves.

In my father's house are many mansions, says Jesus. Meaning thereby in the first place : After this life, another, a better life awaits you. This first, terrestrial, transitory life, this first, so imperfect state, is not the whole of your appointment. This earth is not alone, not principally, where we may be and live and act and be happy. The kingdom of God is spacious, immensely spacious. In my father's house are many mansions ; various, innumerable kinds and gradations of existence,

existence, of life, of agency, of happiness. Though you must sooner or later quit this earth by death, yet you do not therefore quit the empire of God, not the house of your father. You will only be transported into another province, into another district of his dominion, into another dwelling. You thus mount higher, come so much nearer to your heavenly father and to his already perfected children, and to his firstborn son, your brother, your chief.

And all this, affirms Jesus, is as true, as certain as that I tell it you. If it were not so, if your hopes were confined to this life, if after it you had nothing to expect, if I were come into the world to announce and to erect a terrestrial and not a heavenly kingdom, then I would have told you, my scholars, my friends. No; ye believe in God, believe also in me, whom he has sent. Ye trust in him, the infallible deity, then boldly rely on what I promise you in his name and in his stead.

And how could we have doubted thy sincerity, thy integrity, thou amiable patron of the human race, thou venerable friend of God? How totally otherwise wouldst thou have acted and taught, how totally otherwise have behaved towards friends and foes, if any the least fallacy, the least selfishness, the least impurity of motive, had ever contaminated thy generous soul, if ever ought else found access to it but the purest love of truth and
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man and God! goods, the honours, men of this world, and followers against all attachment. even didst neither require nor perse here for the assistance thou brethren; wast even bountiful towards ungrateful; and never sufferedst ingratitude to render thee weary in well-doing; and so should also thy followers expect the reward of their righteousness and fidelity, not from mankind, their brethren, but from their common creator and father. Thou didst gladly sacrifice all things to the will of thy father in heaven, to the salvation of thy brethren on earth: and the same ought they also to do who call themselves thy disciples. Thus were thy affections and thy views ever directed to the future, to the superior, better life, to which thou wert marching: and to that should also thy adherents look, and thither principally direct their thoughts and desires. Thus all that thou didst teach and do, and advise others to do, proclaimed the certainty of a better life to come, and therefore we might confidently rely on thy assertion. Never wouldst thou have given thy friends this hope, unless it were firmly grounded. Never wouldst thou have required such sacrifices of them, never exposed them, as thy messengers and delegates, to so many troubles and perils and persecutions, unless thou couldst promise them with

existence, of the most assured assurance the amplest in-
 you - education and recompense. No, if it were
 not so, if this were not the case, thou wouldst not
 have said it. What force, my pious hearers, must
 these words have in the mouth of unspotted in-
 nocence, of inflexible integrity, of a love entirely
 sacrificing itself for others, and even enduring the
 most tremendous death for their sakes? Yes, him
 we may safely trust, never friend dealt more sin-
 cerely with his friend, no brother more truly with
 his brother, than he deals with us. Yes, after this
 life another better life as certainly awaits us, as
 that Jesus has declared it to us.

In my father's house are many mansions im-
 plies farther, that in the future world, in the su-
 perior life are innumerable kinds and gradations
 of perfection, of agency, of felicity. There every
 sincere follower of God and Jesus Christ is and
 becomes and has and does and enjoys, all that he
 can be and become and have and do and enjoy.
 There are joys for each, occupations for each,
 stations for each. There the fairest prospects open
 for all. There no latent capacity remains unex-
 panded, no ability unemployed, no generous pro-
 pensity ungratified, no good action unrewarded.
 Whoever has dealt faithfully here with the little
 that was committed to him, will there be ap-
 pointed over much; whoever here has made the
 talent that was entrusted to him efficient to the
 benefit of his brother, to him the more will be en-
 trusted

trusted there. He who here in his small, contracted field of operation, does and promotes as much good, public and private, as he at all times can, will there so much the farther and more unimpededly operate around him, so much more influence have on others, so much the more good be able to do. He that has here gratefully and cheerfully enjoyed every boon conferred on him by his father in heaven, has readily fulfilled every duty from motives of obedience and love to him, borne every affliction firmly and patiently as a dispensation from him, will there be the more able and fit to enjoy the most eminent manifestations of his favour, to perform all his commands, to acquiesce entirely in his will, and by every new superior exercise to become still wiser and better. Yes, lie my creator, my father, — this is the comfort of every sincere christian, — he who knows even my most secret thoughts, who is acquainted with my inmost affections, all my abilities, my desires and efforts; he who here conducts and guides me, here regulates and combines all in a view to the future, and thereby prepares me for my superior destination, he will there assign me the place, allot me the occupations, prescribe me the exercises, place me in the conjunctures and circumstances which are best suited to me, to my capacities and endowments, to my necessities, to my character, to my previous behaviour, to my taste, to my practice and habits, which

which are the most accurately commensurate with them, and can most successfully accelerate my progress to greater perfection and happiness; for he knows with infallible certitude, to what purpose he can best employ me, in every situation, in every place, in every province of his immense domain, in every new scene, every new revolution of all worlds and ages; and he, the All-wise, the All-bountiful, surely allows every creature, every faculty, every rational being to effect and become, whatever it is able to effect and become in its combination with the whole. And what prospects, Christians, what prospects here open to our view! How spacious is the house of our Father! How unbounded the theatre of his glory! How little we as yet know of it! What an interminable progress in knowledge, in activity, in felicity, do we behold before us! And what eternity is long enough, to behold all, to do all that the inexhaustible bounty of our father in heaven has prepared for us through his son Jesus, our antecessor and leader?

In my father's house are many mansions, says Jesus. There, where his son, his firstborn, is and lives and reigns, there assemble all his children, there live and reign with him all his faithful votaries and imitators. This, my pious hearers, is a third, not less sublime than comfortable doctrine, delivered in our text. The future life conveys us to Jesus. He is gone before, there to prepare

prepare a place for us. He will hereafter come again and take us to him, that we may be everlastingly, where he is. We shall not for ever be deprived of his visible presence, of his nearer intercourse, we shall one day come to him and be intimately associated with him. What a hope, what a prospect for all who are sensible to the beautiful and good, whose hearts are framed for affection and friendship; for those who know and love Jesus as their deliverer, as their greatest benefactor, as their tenderest friend! To see him, to have communion and converse with him, without whose help we should be the slaves of error, of superstition, of vice, slaves of sordid lusts and passions, whose precepts have so often afforded us light in darkness, comfort in afflictions, courage in dangers, ability in goodness! To behold him, to have communion and converse with him, through whom we know and love God as our Father, through whom we have learnt to exult in our existence and our destination, through whom we even in this life have enjoyed and still daily enjoy so much satisfaction and felicity! To come to him, to be with him, who is the express image, the vicegerent of God, the consummate exemplar of human perfection, to dwell under his proximate inspection and guidance, of him immediately to learn truth and wisdom and superior virtue, and to take an always increasing interest in his power and dominion, in all the prerogatives with which he

he is invested as the head of mankind: what happiness, my dear friends, what felicity! What sacred raptures will then take possession of us, when we behold him, when we see him face to face, whom we now love, though we have not seen, him who loved us even unto death, thank him for his love in the most cordial sentiment of its magnitude, and enjoy all the fruits and effects of it in full measure! Yes, then for the first time shall we justly perceive and thoroughly feel the happiness of being his redeemed, his adherents and followers! Then shall we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Then shall we ascribe honour and glory and praise to him that sitteth on the throne and to the lamb that was slain, for ever and ever!

In our father's house are many mansions, a superior, an eternal life awaits us, there awaits us a state of retribution: this is lastly the best consolation under all the privations we here sustain, in all the adversities we here encounter, under the most painful separations from our relatives and friends. With this hope Jesus consoles his disciples in our text. Let not your heart be troubled, says he to them; be not faint and dispirited. Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, and when that is done, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. No
pains,

pains, no labours, no sufferings that still lie before you are fruitless. No privation that ye may suffer for my sake or for my brethren, is real or irreparable loss. Your sojourn on earth separates you not for ever, not long from me. The end of your terrestrial life is the beginning of our closer reunion, of our everlasting association. And the same hope, the same assurance may and should console and strengthen thee likewise, and never suffer thee to be faint and dispirited, my christian brother. If many unmerited sufferings overtake thee here; there they will become to thee, if thou bear them firmly, and wisely improve them, sources of the purest joy. If thou art here obliged to make many costly sacrifices to thy duty, to thy conscience, to the benefit of thy brother; there wilt thou receive a hundredfold for all the losses thou hast here apparently or really sustained. If thou canst not here proceed so far as thou couldst wish either in the apprehension of truth or in the practice of virtue; if thou find here in both respects so many impediments which thou canst not remove, and difficulties, which thou art not able to overcome; if thou canst here bring to effect but little good: there will those impediments and difficulties no longer stand in thy way, or thy abilities to surmount and to conquer them, will be increased, thy horizon and sphere of operation will be enlarged, inclination and action will be in greater harmony, and nothing will re-
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strain thee in thy exertions after ever higher perfection. If thy social life has here had its various defects and troubles ; thou wilt there enjoy the satisfactions and delights of it more pure and complete in the company of the perfected just. If thou here lose thy friends, the beloved of thy heart, thou wilt regain them there, if they were the friends of God and of virtue, and connect thyself with them for ever. In the Father's house are many mansions. There assemble all the wise and good. There every one finds the object of his desires, the reward of his fidelity, the recompense of his virtue, the most ample compensation for all his sufferings and privations. What comfort, my dear friends, what encouragement to perseverance, to fortitude both in prosperity and adversity, in life and in death !

Oh let us never lose sight of these glorious, these comfortable words of our lord : in my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you ; let us never forget them, but deeply imprint them on our hearts, and thence derive wisdom and felicity ! Yes, let us rejoice in this, that we shall hereafter enter the house of our heavenly father, that we shall come to Jesus our firstborn brother, that we shall abide with him, behold his glory, and be partakers in it. Oh what a totally different appearance does this prospect give to death ! Now it is not extinction, not banishment from the kingdom of life and light.

light. No ; it is the passage into a better life, the departure for home, approximation to God, to union with Jesus, to communion with superior intelligences, it is the enlargement of the compass and sphere of our apprehension and of our operation, the first stage of an everlasting progress to greater perfection and felicity. Thrice happy we, my dear friends, that we are christians, that as such we understand our destination, and under the patronage and guidance of Jesus may so confidently and securely proceed our onward course. Oh let us constantly look up to him, constantly travel the road which he has trod before us, let us think and live in a truly christian manner, principally striving and qualifying ourselves for the things that are above, where Christ is ; so shall we see the end of our earthly existence approach without dismay ; and, encouraged and supported by the glorious prospects which Jesus has opened to us, exchange in hope and assurance this life for the better, the superior life which he has promised and prepared for us.

But let us likewise, fired with a generous ambition, redouble our ardour in goodness, and never be weary in well-doing, that we may fit ourselves for a more elevated station in the house of our heavenly father, where are so many mansions. Yes, my dear friends, all the good that we here conceive, speak, do ; all the sacrifices we here make to God and virtue ; all the care and pains we apply
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SG COMFORTABLE DECLARATION OF JESUS, &c.

to our improvement; all the instances we shew of fidelity in our station and calling; all the proofs we here give of obedience, of righteousness, of patience, of fortitude: all is preparation to that superior state, all has an influence on our future portion, all tends to determine the mansion, the post to which we shall hereafter be admitted in the house of our heavenly father, the occupations we shall there be employed in, and the felicities we shall there enjoy. Here we may already enlarge and beautify that glorious mansion, multiply and refine those occupations, augment those felicities. The present is indissolubly connected with the future, the seedtime with the harvest, preparation with enjoyment. Oh then let us do good, and not be weary in well-doing, for in due time we shall also reap without ceasing. Let us be resolute, immovable in our courage, increasingly zealous in prosecuting the work of God upon earth, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain, not go unrewarded.

Ascension-day.

SERMON XXXIII.

The holy Supper a Feast of Love.

GOD, a deep sense of thy love and the love of thy son Jesus has assembled us here before thee. We intend solemnly to renew the memorial of them and to be happy in their enjoyment. What an enviable and delightful occupation! May we all attend upon it with that seriousness, with that devotion, with that genuine sensibility which so awful a celebration demands! To be beloved by thee, the Supreme, the Infinite, the Eternal; beloved with more than parental affection; to be delivered through love by thy Son, thy Onlybegotten, from sin and bondage and death; and to be able to contemplate and to apprehend this truth, and to be assured afresh of it: what honour, what happiness, what felicity! God, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him? What the son of man, that thou so regardest him? Yes, weak, worthless, guilty as we were, yet thou still lovedst us, and from love didst send thy son to be our saviour! Yes, little as we knew of thee,

little as we sought relief of thee and were worthy of thy succour, yet didst thou, in the abundance of thy love come to our relief, thou best Son of the best Father, didst love us even unto death, and vouchsafe us the most glorious deliverance! Oh how can we ever sufficiently testify our gratitude to thee, and to him who sent thee to us as a deliverer! How can we cordially enough love thee and our heavenly father! How sufficiently rejoice in our common happiness, and how find room enough in our hearts for the brotherly affection which should flow into them by the social enjoyment of it? Oh that the whole of our future lives might be one continued act of gratitude, of love! How pure, how holy, how blessed would it be! O gracious Father, do thou send down the spirit of love and of joy into our hearts. Let it kindle in us that sacred fervour; let it consume in us all degrading appetites and sordid affections; and let us now so reflect on these important, consoling objects, and so solemnize this feast of love, that we may be transfused with unfeigned love to thee and thy son Jesus, and with cordial brotherly affection to each other, and all be blessed in the fruition of it! These and all other our petitions we offer up unto thee, as our affectionate heavenly father, who is ever ready to bestow upon his children what is needful and proper for them; in all things resigning ourselves to thy compassions, and humbly concluding our addresses

dresses to thee in the name and words of our redeemer Jesus: Our father, &c.

ACTS ii. 46.

And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

LOVE, as it is unquestionably one of the most natural and general, so is it likewise one of the most agreeable and delightful emotions of the human heart. Whoever therefore promotes love, at the same time promotes happiness; and the firmer, the purer, the nobler that love is, the more solid and permanent is this happiness. Because God is in his very self pure love, the most consummate love, therefore is his existence pure essential happiness and consummate felicity. The nearer we resemble him with regard to the one, the nearer likewise respecting the other. And if this standard be just where shall we find a more authentic, more perfect doctrine of happiness than in christianity? Tend not all its doctrines, all its precepts, all its promises, all its rites to kindle and enflame the purest, noblest love both to God and man? What idea does it give us of the deity, of his relations and dispositions towards us, of his views respecting us, of his demands upon us, which is not adapted to certify us of the love of that gracious and benevolent being, and to inspire us with reciprocal love to him? What duties

duties does it enjoin us, which do not centre in pure philanthropy and fraternal love, which are not propitious in all manner of ways to that love, and do not restrain and purify us from whatever might diminish or dissolve it? What promises, prospects and expectations does it give us, that do not cement us more closely together, by inviting us all to draw from the same source of consolation? What rites does it prescribe that do not strengthen our union, that do not augment our attachment? Yes, christianity is the religion of love, the doctrine of happiness by love; it reveals and preaches only love, it breathes in its genuine confessors nothing but love. By love it tends to diminish and remove sin and misery, and to propagate virtue and felicity among mankind. Love is to distinguish its confessors from those who are not, or not so indeed and in truth, by forming them into a select community of eminently good and happy persons. Such is its whole tenour and purport; this is the distinctive character of the noble few by whom it is actually attained. Oh that we also might belong to that comparatively few! Oh that it might likewise properly be said of us, as it is in our text and in other collateral passages, of the first disciples of our lord, the primitive confessors of christianity, that they were all constantly of one accord together, they were all of one heart and one mind, and breaking bread from house to house. Love to God, love

to Jesus, love to one another animated them all, and this rendered it a duty and a delight to them, as often as they came together, to celebrate the lord's supper. To them it was a real feast of love. And the same should it be likewise to us, my dear friends. * We have just the same reasons for it as they had, and many of them we even see in a clearer light than they did, and ought therefore the more energetically to feel their force. The transactions which they commemorated, were still fresh in their recollection, still floated in lively images before their eyes. The generality, perhaps all of them, had known Jesus, had heard him, had beheld him, had beheld him dying on the cross, many had seen him again after his resurrection. All this must certainly have made deep impressions of pain and joy on them, and have caused them to take a hearty interest in all his contingences. They moreover composed a small, despised, oppressed and persecuted society. This kept them so much the closer together, held them more united, implicated all their concerns in one common interest, and made them so much the dearer one to the other. In the mean time the principal object, on which the whole matter depends, remains always the same, whatever difference may be in outward circumstances. The holy supper is and always continues to be a feast of love. And so will we now consider and partake of it. Yes, christians, it is a feast of the
 love

love of God ; a feast of the love of Jesus ; a feast of christian brotherly love. Three particulars that open to us so many sources of pious thoughts and emotions suitable to the sacred act we are about to celebrate. May we all derive from them abundance of joy and felicity !

The holy supper is a feast of the love of God, Here we see the love of God, our heavenly father, in all its lustre ; here we enjoy it in its full measure. Yes ; in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten son into the world, that we might live through him, through him be happy : herein is love, herein is it displayed in all its magnitude, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. And indeed, my dear friends, could God have given us any clearer, stronger demonstration of his paternal condescension and love, than what he has given us through Jesus ? Feeble creatures, dust and ashes, not much superior to the beasts of the field ; frail, sinful, guilty people, who had enervated, degraded, corrupted themselves, alienated themselves from God, strayed from their proper destination, intangled themselves in the mazes of folly and vice, and thus plunged themselves in indigence and distress : to these creatures, to these persons, the Most High, the All-sufficient, the creator and lord of heaven and earth, sends his son, his beloved, to reclaim them
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from their deviations, to lead them back to God, their creator and father, to deliver them from sin and misery, to bring from heaven to earth light into their darkness, new vitality for their almost extinguished spirit, content and serenity for their agitated hearts. And by this his son, his beloved, proclaims to them mercy and grace for the rigours of justice, pardon and obliteration of sin for condign punishment, everlasting life, everlasting happiness instead of the absolute ruin and perdition, on the very brink of which they stood. And this his son, his beloved, in whom he had the utmost complacency, he permits to sojourn and teach among them in the humblest form, permits him to experience all the limitations, all the infirmities, all the temptations of our nature, to bear all the troubles and burdens of humanity; permits him to be a mark for their scorn, their contradiction, their mockeries, their persecution; permits him to die, no less ignominiously than painfully, as a malefactor, on the cross, in order to perfect him through sufferings, in order to present to us a model of the completest human virtue, in order to assure us, sensibly and even as it were palpably, the manner best adapted to our imbecility, of his reconciliation, and then by his resurrection from the dead to give his legation and his whole commission the highest credibility and his promises the most authentic sanction! What demonstrations of love, of the most

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condescending and tender parental affection ! And this love of God is in loud accents proclaimed to us here by the symbols of the crucified body and the flowing blood of Jesus. Of this love of God we are reminded, of this love of God we are certified by all that we here see and hear and do. Yes, here we enjoy in full measure the effects, the fruits of this unrivalled love of God. Here we draw nigh to him, not as slaves, not as criminals, trembling at the sight of their judge ; but as children, as favoured, eminently endowed children, meet together in his house, at his table, and rejoice and glory in his being our father. Here we are truly blessed in the enjoyment of all the benefits wherewith he has favoured us through his son Jesus. Blessed in the knowledge of the only true God and of his gracious dispositions towards us ; blessed in the sentiment of his paternal superintendence and direction, in his powerful protection and support, blessed in the hope of perpetually approaching nearer to him and of more completely enjoying his inexhaustible love.

And the less we here are able to call in question the love of God ; the greater and more glorious the evidences of it are, which we in a manner see with our eyes, and touch with our hands ; and the more blessed we are in the enjoyment of it : the more forcibly must we feel ourselves bound and impelled to return him love for love. Yes, let us love him, him who first, who so inexpressibly loved

loved us! He alone is worthy of our entire affection. To love him is unalloyed felicity; the purest, the supreme felicity of intelligent, thinking beings! And where is the human heart that can love him with competent fervour and adequate to his mercies? What can we give him, what can we do in return for his benefits and to testify the sincerity of our affection? What is all the homage that we can pay to him, what are all the sacrifices and oblations we can bring him, in comparison of the donation of his son, the only-begotten? Who can love as God loves? And who can do or suffer anything from love to God, without being blessed himself in what he thus does or suffers? And shall we murmur or repine at any demand that God makes on us; be dissatisfied with any judgment that he impends over us; deem any sacrifice too costly that he requires? And shall we not be all submission, all obedience, all ardour, all gratitude, whenever God commands and orders, whenever by any means he gives us to know his will and his designs? Yes, Almighty Parent, yes, here is our heart; that thou requirest of us, and that we bring to thee! It is thine, and be all its thoughts and affections and inclinations and desires devoted unto thee! May filial love to thee inspire and regulate them all, and may every intimation of thy will be to us an inviolable law, and the faithful accomplishment of it a source of felicity and joy.

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In like manner, my pious hearers, is the holy supper a feast of love to Jesus, our Lord. Here we behold; here we admire the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of his immense affection for the human race. Here we see, here we admire how much, how infinitely much he forsook, sacrificed, rejected, ventured, did, suffered out of love to us and to our brethren. This holy feast emphatically reminds us of that sublime, disinterested, unprecedented love to this wandering wretched race of mortals, that brought him, the lord of glory, from heaven to the earth, from the most resplendent height to the deepest abasement, from a throne to the condition of a servant, to the cross and to the sepulchre! No scorn, no derision, no ingratitude, no opposition, no difficulty, no danger, no sufferings could abate his love; it was stronger than death, firmer than the grave; it forgot itself for the sake of its objects, and conquered all difficulties to save and to bless. What friend ever loved his friend, his most generous and bountiful friend, as Jesus loved mankind; mankind who knew him not, who could not requite his love, whose temper and sentiments were so different from his? Yes, this is love, far, far exceeding all else that bears the name; the love of a God in the human form!

And here, my dear friends, here we enjoy the fruits and effects of this love of our lord. The bright effulgence which he brought with him
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from heaven enlightens and irradiates us: the virtue and the efficacy that emanated from him, vivify us: the serenity, the assurance, the hope which he prepared for mankind, restore and reanimate us: the prospects into better worlds which he opened to them, are our comfort and joy. Through him we know the True, the Only, the Eternal, the Infinite, and draw nigh to him with childlike confidence as to our father; through him we are certified of his favour, of his complacency, of the pardon of our sins; through him we may calmly acquiesce in his wise and gracious providence; through him we may walk with alacrity and courage along the path of duty and virtue, through him we have force enough to conquer all things and to persevere unto the end; through him we may undauntedly meet death, and rejoice by anticipation in the superior life, the purer happiness that awaits us after it. Oh for what are we not beholden to that love of our lord, of which we are reminded by this holy supper; and how much more shall we be beholden to it hereafter, when our course is finished, and we bear away the glorious prize of victory, the unfading crown which stands full in our view at the goal! Yes, this feast is to me the clearest proof, the surest pledge of the love of my lord; and how could I ever celebrate it with reflection, with consideration, without being pervaded entirely by this his love? And how could I perceive and feel the value

value of his love; how taste its felicity, without being fired with reciprocal love for him, the most amiable pattern of goodness and perfection? Here we perceive and feel all the blessed relations and connections in which we stand to him, and which are adapted to inspire us with the most sincere and cordial affection for him. Yes, I am his scholar; of him I have learnt the truth, the most important, most comfortable, most indispensable truth: and shall I not love him, my teacher, this faithful, authentic, infallible teacher? Shall I not rejoice in his tuition and the light and the certainty that he has procured me? I am his delivered, his redeemed captive: and shall I not love my deliverer, who snatched me from ruin by the sacrifice of his own life? Shall I not rejoice in the life, the liberty, the security, the happiness, which he purchased for me at so dear a price? I am his kinsman, his brother, a member of his body, partaker in all his fortunes and prerogatives: and shall I not love him, who is the honour and the glory of the whole human race, who animates and pervades with his spirit all the members of his body, who readily imparts to his people whatever he is and has, and applies all to their benefit? Shall I not rejoice in my alliance and fellowship with him? I am his follower; I walk in his footsteps; see everywhere the shining traces of his unspotted wisdom and virtue, his exalted devotion and philanthropy, and in them find every-

everywhere the strongest incitements to push forwards after higher perfection: and shall I not love him, my forerunner and leader? Shall I not heartily rejoice in every encouragement and support, every call to fidelity and resolution that I receive from him, every greater degree of similarity with him that I perceive in myself? I am his subject; I am governed by him with consummate wisdom and benignity: and shall I not love him, my wisest, kindest and most gracious master? And shall I not sincerely rejoice in living under his guardianship and controul, and in acting by his laws, which are essential truth and felicity, and are equally valid in heaven and on earth? I am the coheir of his kingdom, the partner of his glory; I shall hereafter live and reign and abide everlastingly with him: and shall I not love him, who has opened and levelled for me the road to that happiness, who has prepared for me joys, which at present my heart is not able to conceive? And shall I not rejoice that I shall hereafter go to him, behold him face to face, and in his society completely enjoy that felicity, the anticipation, the foretaste whereof now suffuses me with bliss? No; sooner must I become totally indifferent to whatever is beautiful and good and desirable; sooner must my heart become dead to all sensation; sooner must I forget, sooner be capable of hating myself; than ever the fire of love for him, my master and lord, be extinct in my heart, for him,

him, with whom I am so closely, so intimately connected! No, here is the altar at which this sacred fire continually receives its nourishment, and breaks out into a purer, a brighter flame!

Lastly, my pious hearers, the holy supper is a feast of christian brotherly love. Far hence away, all such, if any such there be, as harbour malice in their souls, all cold, insensible, morose and selfish hearts, all the vassals of envy, hatred and revenge! Far hence, every the slightest suggestion of vanity and pride, whereby one exalts himself above another, and one in comparison of himself despises another! He who loves not mankind his brethren, he who knows not the felicity of that attachment, let him not by his presence profane this feast of love, lest he propagate chillness and death, where life and warmth should transpire and animate all hearts! And in fact, my dear friends, here are presented to us the strongest motives to love one another, and here we may feel their full weight and energy. Do we not here rejoice and glory in our common deliverance, forgiveness, elevation, and happiness? And what links mankind more closely together, what more inspires them with mutual esteem and affection, more complacency in each other, than the having encountered the same dangers, been freed from the same calamities, are enjoying the same benefits, and pressing forward to the same happiness? Ignorance, wickedness, thralldom, dread

dread of death and the grave, dread of annihilation or of rigorous, terrible punishment: what calamities, under which mankind our brethren, formerly sighed, and under which we should likewise sigh, had we not been relieved by Jesus! Knowledge of the truth, energy to virtue, liberty, the hope of a blessed immortality: what benefits, which we now in common enjoy as christians! And what a bond of love to all who apprehend their worth! Here we behold in one another children of God, brethren of Jesus, inheritors of heaven. Such is he that is poor as well as he that is rich, the low as well as the high, the last as well as the first. And shall we be indifferent or cold to any one of them? Shall we see any one without complacency, without affection? God, having done so much for us all, must therefore esteem us all and intend our good: and shall we not esteem and embrace one another with cordial benevolence? Jesus has sacrificed so much for us all, suffered so much, laid down his life for us all; we must therefore all be dear in his sight, as capable of greater things and destined to greater: and shall we not be dear to one another, shall we not all be ready to make reciprocal sacrifices to courtesy, to affection, to friendship? What will move and incite us so to do, if these considerations cannot?

Here, my devout audience, we have before us farther the completest, most captivating pattern of
love,

love, a pattern that obliges us most cogently to imitation; it is the love of our lord. As he loved us, so ought we also to love one another. This was the first and the last commandment, the vital principle of all the commandments that he gave to his disciples. We should love one another, as he has loved us. And how then has our lord loved us? His love was universal, comprehended all mankind, good and bad, friends and foes; it was intensely active, it was exerted continually in relief and beneficence; it was entirely disinterested, and sacrificed all to the happiness of its objects; it was indefatigable and unalterable, pursued its aim immovably and let nothing, absolutely nothing detain it from the prosecution of it. And so, this holy institution tells us, so should also your mutual love be framed, all you who profess to be his disciples and followers. Let no christian, no human being be excluded from it; let no sacrifice that you make to your brethren be too costly for you; let it not consist in flattering speeches, not in barren sentiment, but in deed and in truth; and continue unweariedly working while there is any kind of misery that you can diminish or any kind of happiness that you can promote. And shall not this call of our Lord, whose memory we here celebrate, inspire us all with the most sincere and active love for one another?

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To conclude; we here all engage in a series of actions, which, if they express not love, sincere, cordial love, true brotherly love, have actually no signification at all: and yet we engage in them without compulsion, of our own free will, and would have every one so to understand and interpret them. Here we assemble in the house of our father, as his children, as brothers and sisters. Here we celebrate the festival of his firstborn son, our brother. Here we all drink of one cup and eat of one bread. Can persons of understanding and after mature deliberation do this, who are aliens to one another, who take no participation in their reciprocal concerns and interests, who feel nothing for one another, or perhaps may be even at enmity together? Would not this be the most scandalous hypocrisy, a most manifest incongruity? Rather, while we are engaged in this act, is it not just as if we said to one another: Come, brothers and sisters, let us return thanks to our common Father in heaven for the abundance of his mercies and be happy in the enjoyment of them: let us celebrate the festival of our brother, who is at the same time our deliverer and our lord, and rejoice in his salvation and our own good hap! Our heavenly father loves us all and blesses us all. Our brother, our lord, died for us all, and has opened to all of us the way to God and to the felicity of heaven. We have all the same title to his love and to that felicity, the

same hope of going hereafter to him and of abiding with him for ever. He requires of us our heart; sincerity is all that he demands. In his sight our station, our rank, our opulence, our erudition, in his sight all our external preferences are of no account. But real, pure, active beneficence is precious in his esteem. Come, let us shew ourselves glad in him by our love, by our mutual endeavours to become continually more humane, continually more bountiful and generally useful. Let us all rejoice in one another, as he rejoices in us all. Let us serve and assist one another, as he has holpen and still helps us all. Let us facilitate to each other our race towards the mark, to which he invites us all, at which he will gather us all to himself, and present to every one the glorious prize of his philanthropy, of his christian charity.

And thus, my pious hearers, thus is the sacred supper in all respects a feast of love, the most generous, most blissful love; as the solemn recollection, as the actual exertion and enjoyment of it, as the obligation and encouragement to it. Oh may this sacred ardour seize and enflame us all! Yes, my dear friends, love, the love of God, the love of Jesus, the love of our brethren should accompany us to the table of our lord, and there entirely pervade us! It should banish all servile dread, all anxiety from our hearts and expand them to confidence and religious joy! Yes, may this love now and henceforth be the efficient principle

ciple of all that we think and do. It will alleviate the burdens of life and sweeten its pleasures. It will render every duty a delight and every affliction a benefit. It will endue us with courage and force to contend and to conquer, and help us to overcome all things that might detain or dishearten us in our career to the goal of perfection. It will prove a source whence we may continually derive serenity, refreshment, joy, felicity, and the delicious foretaste of still greater bliss in better worlds! Yes, divine, celestial love, our hearts expand to thee! Oh take possession of them; there henceforth live and reign; refine and purify all our affections and appetites; fertilize every germ of goodness, of generous action that lies dormant in them; let us never be wearied in righteousness and beneficence; let thy mighty influence increasingly diffuse peace and felicity within us and around us, and thus render us perpetually more susceptible of the nearer communion with God and with his son Jesus! Amen.

Communion.

SERMON XXXIV.

The Spirit of Christianity.

GOD, our bountiful father, that thou hast called us to christianity is a benefit for which we can never be sufficiently grateful! A benefit which, with regard to knowledge and morals, to means of improvement and serenity of mind, gives us the greatest preeminences over a considerable part of the other inhabitants of the earth! A benefit which likewise with respect to wisdom, to virtue, to substantial happiness might and would give us as signal advantages beyond them, if we properly employed it! But of this all of us dare not — ah perhaps only few of us dare presume to boast. No; christianity is not indeed to us what it might and ought to be! No; we are not yet become so wise, so good, so cheerful and happy by its means, as we might! Here, in thy awful presence, most merciful father, we confess and feel it; here in thy presence we are ashamed of our ingratitude and negligence; we are now desirous
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of becoming better christians and of experiencing more of the power and felicity of christianity. Oh grant then that this confession, this sentiment, this compunction may be truly salutary and our desires in reality accomplished ! Teach us a thorough knowledge of christianity according to its true nature and design, cause it to be of the last importance to us, open our hearts to its divine and efficacious influence, to its all-vivifying spirit, and let it dwell and reign in us, forming us into such persons as are christians in deed and in truth ! Bless to this end the discourse of thy servant ! Let his remonstrances find acceptance, imprint them deeply on our souls and cause them to work our improvement and felicity ! And, as thou dost teach the hearts of thy faithful people by imparting to them the light of thy holy spirit, grant us by the same spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in thy holy comforts which thou hast vouchsafed us in our lord and saviour Jesus Christ ; who, knowing our necessities and our ignorance in asking, taught us, as his votaries and thy children, to present our petitions to thee in childlike confidence and in this prevailing form : Our father, &c.

GALATIANS V. 6.

In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by love.

WE often speak, my pious hearers, in our public discourses of the spirit of christianity ; we frequently

quently tell you, that we should be filled with it, be transfused with it, that we can only be truly wise and good and happy inasmuch as we are animated and governed by that spirit. What then is that spirit of christianity? Wherein does it consist, how does it shew itself? To answer these questions, and thereby to render you more conversant with that christianity, the public and solemn confession whereof has brought numbers of you hither, is the purport of my present discourse.

By the spirit of christianity we understand the principles and views of the gospel; that which makes christianity what it is; that whither all its doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, tend; that whereby it is a source of spiritual life, of generally useful activity, of superior felicity among mankind; that, which remains of christianity, after all outward marks, all rites and ceremonies, all controversial opinions which divide christians, are removed, and what all sincere votaries of it, of whatever ecclesiastical society they may be, have in common together, what produces in them all, those better sentiments, that energy to goodness, that selfpossession and felicity which is peculiar to them.

This spirit of christianity, my pious hearers, has been and still is very frequently misapprehended. How many centuries, how many longer and shorter periods of time, how many great
christian

christian societies, does history offer to our view, wherein christianity was hardly anything more than a dead letter, the name of a sect, a more or less subtile and complex theory of incomprehensible dogmas and unprofitable problems; when it almost entirely consisted in ceremonies and rites; when it was distinguished only by externals, only by its form, from the jewish and pagan superstitions; when it was totally nerveless and effete, or only excited the spirit of party, of contention, of hatred, of persecution among its professors! And even at present, my dear friends, how many christians are attached merely to the name, to the appearance, the external form, the outward characteristics of christianity, contenting themselves with professing its doctrines, with the observance of its rites, with the attendance on some religious exercises, and withal remain as cold, as lifeless, as reluctant and unapt to all acts of goodness, as persons who are not styled christians can possibly be! And where lives and moves the true spirit of christianity? Where does it produce those childlike sentiments towards God, those fraternal dispositions towards all mankind, that pure exalted virtue, that superlative felicity, which it is designed and adapted to produce?

Far be it from me, my dear friends, to deny the good effects of christianity! Far from me to believe that they are not powerfully displayed by many of its confessors, by several even amongst us!

us! No; if I did not believe this, did not believe it from conviction, had not the happiness partly to know it from experience; far then should it be from me to preach christianity, and to commend its divine efficacy to the felicity of mankind! No; its spirit lives and operates even amongst us; operates much, effectuates much good in us and by us; and its effects would soon be more general and efficacious and fruitful in truly christian dispositions and actions, if we were better acquainted with christianity, and made ourselves more conversant with its contents, reflected more on its design, and put fewer obstacles in the way of its influence upon our hearts.

In order to promote these views, my pious hearers, in order to point out to you, what christianity should be to us, what it should effectuate in us, how its efficacy should be exerted in us, what we may look for in it and promise ourselves from it, we will now endeavour to obtain a more adequate apprehension of the spirit of christianity. — Oh, while I am attempting to describe and to express it in words, might it glide into our hearts, penetrate them with its light and with its warmth, and take up its abode in them for ever! How much better then would the experience of it teach us, than any discourse of mine could do! How thoroughly then should we be persuaded of the truth of the apostolical declaration in our text: In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any-
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thing, nor uncircumcision ; in christianity outward marks of distinction and privileges are of no consequence at all, nothing is of any account except the faith that worketh by love.

The spirit of christianity, my friends, is a spirit of faith, a spirit of devotion, a spirit of love, a spirit of joy : that is, faith, devotion, love, joy, compose the essence, the peculiar substance of christianity ; — are that, whereunto everything in christianity tends, that whereby it makes its professors eminently good and happy persons ; that whereby it exerts its proper energy, and what confers upon it the whole of its value. Where faith, devotion, love and joy subsist ; where they regulate the heart and the conduct of mankind : there is christianity, real, genuine christianity. And where they are not, there all pretences to christianity are vain ; there it is nothing but an empty name, a word without meaning, a dead carcase void of spirit.

The spirit of christianity is therefore first a spirit of faith ; of faith in God, faith in Jesus, faith in man. Ye believe in God, believe also in me, said Jesus to his disciples a little before his separation from them ; trust in God, whom I have made known to you as your father, and trust in me, whom he has sent to you as his representative : and christianity says the same thing to all its confessors. Belief, trust, confidence are its primary requisites. This belief, this trust, this confidence,

confidence, are presupposed in all its doctrines, all its precepts, all its promises. Without this belief, without this trust, without this confidence, a man can neither discern the christian verity, nor practise christian virtue, nor pacify his mind nor rejoice in christian hope. Indeed christianity requires no belief without conviction, no trust without sufficient ground, no confidence that rests on the imagination; but, in the liberal acceptance of the term, a simple belief, contented with the arguments suited to the subject and acquiescing in them, a cordial, filial, unbounded trust, a full and firm reliance. It requires of its professors, that faith, that trust, that confidence which children should have towards their parents, pupils towards their tutor, patients towards their physician, if they would fulfil the duties of children, of pupils, of patients, would be well brought up, well instructed, and radically cured. Man, my dear friends, the learned as well as the unlearned, without divine instruction, without divine assistance and support, can never attain to a thorough satisfactory knowledge of the truth, to a thoroughly solid pacification of his mind and improvement of his heart, to a cheerful and steady course of virtue. The more he is left to himself, the more is he exposed to errors, to deviations, to transgressions, to doubts and difficulties. He must have somebody to whom he can attach himself, on whom he can rely, whom he may boldly and securely

securely follow. Belief in God, trust in God, reliance on God, are what must lead and guide him, soothe and fortify him, where his own sagacity fails him, when he feels his own weakness, when he perceives difficulties and dangers, when he cannot examine and dive into the reasons and the combinations and the consequences of things. And that is the end and design of christianity. This important, this essential service it affords to the man who is animated by its spirit. The christian believes in God and believes in Jesus. Convinced of his own ignorance and weakness, and contented with the proportion of light and of discernment which God has thought fit to impart to him in his present state, he adheres to the information that God gives him by the gospel, submits to all the declarations of his revelation, subscribes to all his demands and injunctions, relies on all his promises, resigns himself to all events, hopes and expects from him the supply of all his wants, the enjoyment of all the happiness of which he is susceptible, and trusts to him more, infinitely more, than a child can trust to the wisest, the best, the most powerful father. Never will he question the wisdom of the institutions and ordinations of God, the reasonableness of his commands, the equity of his dispensations, never doubt of the certain accomplishment of his promises, nor of the happy, the blessed issue of a life spent under his discipline and guidance; and if

if ever any doubts of this nature should chance to assail his mind, then will the filial, confident belief, with which he honours God, soon deprive them of all their force. — No less firmly does the christian adhere to Jesus. Him he reveres as an infallible teacher of truth, as the most authentic expositor of the divine will, as the safest, the faithfullest guide to perfection. He ascribes to him the utmost readiness and the highest authority to deliver sinful man and to render him happy. His direction to virtue and happiness he follows without conditions or reserve, he commits himself entirely and boldly to his guidance, he imitates his example in all respects with alacrity, treads in his footsteps always with complacency, opens every avenue of his heart to his temper and spirit, from his hands and through his mediation he expects blessing and life both in the present and in the future world. What Jesus reveals to him as truth, that he accepts as authentic, simple, eternal, and immutable verity : what Jesus orders him to do, that he does without delay, that he acknowledges as an inviolable duty, that is to him the means and the way to felicity : what Jesus promises him on God's behalf, of whose warranty he doubts not one moment, in that he soothes and cheers himself, as though he already possessed it. Thus does the christian believe in God and in Jesus, and the firmer, the more operative this belief is, the more will he believe also in man ;
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the more will he trust his brethren, the more will he honour the image and the spirit of God in them, the more will he expect from them integrity and virtue, truth and fidelity, the less will he doubt that mankind are capable of liberal sentiments, of disinterested acts, magnanimous sacrifices, a high degree of wisdom and holiness.

The spirit of christianity is secondly a spirit of devotion. To divest us of all anxious servile dread of God, to inspire us with childlike affections towards him, to bring us nearer to him, to teach us to walk in his presence and before his face, to render us more capable of his fellowship and to be happier in the enjoyment of it, is the scope and design of christianity, hither all its doctrines and precepts tend, as to their common centre. And this is devotion, devotion of the heart, filial piety towards God. How far superior to what the jew and the heathen called devotion, and what even at present the nominal christian calls by that name! If the Israelite dared to approach the habitation of his God and King only to a certain distance, only through the mediation of the priest, if he could not draw near to him without fear and terror, and his devotion very often consisted in costly sacrifices and solemn rites; if the heathen scarcely knew to which of his gods he should turn, what he had to hope or to fear from them; if both the one and the other attributed to the supreme being anger and jealousy and partiality,
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human weaknesses and passions; and if the nominal christian even at present thinks to conciliate the favour of that being by outward reverence and forms of worship; or, by a blind assent to unintelligible dogmas, by a rigid abstinence from indifferent things to appease and to propitiate him: yet is the christian who is animated by the genuine spirit of christianity, free from all these errors. His devotion is no less rational than ardent, no less frank than reverential. The thought of God is not foreign, not importunate to him; he need not put it away from him that he may be at ease: it is welcome to him at all times, in every place, in every state of mind, in every business and amusement, in every company — never the cause of terror and servile dread, but continually the basis and source of confidence and joy. It is his pleasure and delight to draw nigh unto God, his creator and father, in all things to fix his regards on him and his will, to consider, to judge, to do, to suffer and to enjoy all in its dependance on him. This, my dear friends, is a characteristic of christian devotion. The christian does all in reference to God, all from obedience to God, all in the design of pleasing him, of more nearly resembling him, of becoming more capable of the influence and energies of his informing spirit. Not as though, in whatever he does, in his most trivial actions, he were always clearly and distinctly conscious of that design; not as though
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he had not in view, or was not desirous of attaining any other, subordinate object. No ; christianity allows him, it even encourages him, to seek after praise, after honour, after immortality, to think of whatsoever things are laudable and of good-report, to be gratified with the cheering voice of well-earned fame, to advance his outward welfare and to enjoy any innoxious, whether sensual or intellectual recreation. He has however so strictly associated the idea of God, his Father and Sovereign, with all his other ideas, the apprehension of the presence and inspection of God with all his other sentiments, that all, more or less, mediately or immediately, excite, cherish, heighten, these thoughts, this sentiment in him, all leads him to God, reminds him of God, makes him more acquainted and conversant with God and his will. The devotion of the christian is therefore not confined to his morning and evening prayers, to sundays and holidays, to communion and fast-days. It consists not solely in what is called public and private worship. It is the vital principle of his whole life, and renders the entire course of it one continued adoration of the Most High. It may not only consist with all his views, enterprises, avocations, entertainments; but it has the most diversified and blessed influence on them ; it purifies all his designs, sanctifies all his undertakings, dignifies all his occupations, enhances and sweetens all his pleasures.

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Its spirit, its genius and its efficacy are exerted in all that he thinks and does, and give additional truth, additional life, greater dignity, more fertility, to whatever he thinks and does. Thus does christianity render its genuine confessors entirely devout, all of a piece throughout, and heavenly all; and this devotion is to the christian exactly what the spirit is to the body. As the body without the spirit is dead, so the professor of christianity without devotion ceases to be a christian.

The spirit of christianity is, thirdly, a spirit of love. On the faith, says our text, that worketh by love, that shews itself operative by love, the whole stress of christianity rests. And in fact, my dear friends, what does christianity preach, what does it display, what certify, what recommend, what does it promise more than love? What more exalts it above other virtues and felicities than it? The total amount of the law, we are informed, is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, from faith unfeigned: love is the fulfilling of the law: love is the bond of perfectness: faith, hope and love remain, when all other excellencies leave us, but love even of all those abiding excellencies is the greatest. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, says Jesus, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; this is the first, the chief commandment; and the second is like unto

unto it : thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Continue in my love, says he to his disciples, and love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples; my followers.

And assuredly, my dear friends, the love of God, the love of Jesus, the love of mankind, belong as essentially to christianity, as respiration belongs to the preservation of the natural body. A christian without love is a solecism in terms, a prodigy ! As we cannot form an idea of God without love, so neither can we imagine to ourselves a christian without love. God is the abstract of pure love, essential benevolence, essential benignity. And so should the christian, as his son, as his imitator, be all benevolence, all kindness. And that is the christian who is thoroughly imbued and actuated by the spirit of christianity. Love is the vital principle and regulating spring of his whole temper and conduct as, transformed and improved by the precepts of the gospel. Because he loves God above all things, he therefore has him and his will continually before his eyes, he reveres and serves him with complacency, he is at all times prompt to obey him, he trusts to him entirely, he resigns himself and his destinies to him with unshaken confidence. Because he cordially loves Jesus, he therefore believes and trusts in all his doctrines and declarations, he follows all his directions to righteous-

ness and virtue, he commits himself boldly to his guidance, treads with alacrity in his footsteps, moulds himself entirely upon his character, and promotes with inward satisfaction his great work on earth. Because he loves mankind as his brethren, he therefore embraces them all with benevolence, he acts with justice and candour towards them, he is equitable, obliging, beneficent to them all, patient, gentle, conciliating towards all, lives more for others than for himself, had rather serve others than be served by them, and uniformly seeks and finds his own satisfaction in the satisfaction of others, his own prosperity in their's. Love impels him to every, even the harshest duty, and love renders every, even the harshest duty, easy and agreeable to him. — Love is the unalterable rule by which he chuses and rejects, speaks and is silent, acts and refrains from acting, gives and receives, enjoys and suffers; the rule by which he employs his capacities, his abilities, his property, his time, his interest, in this way or that, according as the exigencies and the benefit of his brethren may require. Love is the energy, the all-controlling and conquering energy which renders him capable of the most laborious undertakings, the most costly sacrifices, the most disinterested actions, the most vigorous perseverance in doing and enduring, whenever he can thereby effect any good and diffuse satisfaction and happiness around him. — Love is the ultimate scope of

of all his desires and endeavours. Ever, to be more closely uniting himself with mankind his brethren and co-partners in the future glory, with Jesus their common chieftain and lord, with God the creator and father of all, is the purest, the highest felicity that he knows, after which he is constantly stretching, in which he finds the richest recompense of his christian virtues. — Wherever therefore real christianity is, there is real love : wherever the spirit of christianity rules and governs, there rules and governs love ! He that dwelleth in love, says the apostle, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God : for God is love.

The spirit of christianity is, lastly, a spirit of joy. The christian, when not prevented by sickness, should be distinguished by his hilarity and serenity of mind, by a confident and easy deportment, and by those very means be happier than others. Rejoice in the Lord, is uniformly the language of christianity to its genuine confessors, rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice. And how various, how firmly grounded, how glorious the joy to which it entitles and excites us ! — Joy in the light of truth, with which we are enlightened by the gospel, in the new, better, heavenly temper it has conferred upon us, in the liberty to which it has brought us, in the courage and resolution it affords us in contending with

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iniquity and in discharging our duty, in the assurance of our reconciliation and the plenary pardon of our sins, which the son of the Highest has brought us from heaven : — Joy in God, that he is, that he is the father of us all, is benevolent to us all, watches and provides for us all, leads us and all his works to our destination and to superior perfection, that he is our father in teaching us, our father in prescribing laws to us, our father in chastening and exercising us, our father in recompensing and rewarding us. — Joy in Jesus, who is become our brother, our leader, our forerunner, our head, who took our nature upon him, loved and still loves us more than himself, who has done and suffered so much, so unspeakably much for us, has delivered us from so many oppressing evils, and made us partakers of so many felicities, and from whom we may still hope and expect so much. — Joy in mankind, our brethren, who, like us, are children of God, like us fashioned and ordained to immortality, and capable of such high perfection ; joy in all the good qualities, capacities, and innate dispositions which they possess, in all the good actions they do, in all the privileges and pleasures they enjoy. — Joy in the present, which depends entirely on God, is entirely governed by him according to the laws of consummate wisdom ; which yields us so many benefits and blessings temporal and spiritual, so much more good than evil, so many more joys than

than sorrows, so many means to discipline and improvement, affords us so many opportunities and excitements to good, beneficent, generally useful actions, thus enabling us to sow in such abundance for the future harvest. — In a word, joy in the future, in that better, everlasting life which awaits us after death, in the glory that God will hereafter reveal to his children, the rich rewards with which he will crown their fidelity, the brighter light, the purer virtue, the greater activity, the superior felicity, to which he will then exalt them. — — Consequently, joy in whatever is beautiful, whatever is great, whatever is good, whatever is desirable; joy in God and man; acquiescence in God, in all that he causes and does, disposes and permits; satisfied with ourselves, with our improved life and temper; satisfied with our present and future destinies. This is the spirit of christianity; this all its doctrines and commands and promises inculcate; with such sentiments it is calculated to inspire all its genuine confessors. The more cheerful and serene the christian is, the more contented and gladly he thinks and acts; the more is he a christian, the more does he think and act as behoves a christian.

But where, my dear friends, where is now in general the spirit of christianity which we have been hitherto recommending to you? Where does it live and move and operate? Where are the temples wherein it resides and appears? Certainly
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not there, where we hearken to the suggestions of unbelief, of scepticism, of distrust towards God, of dissatisfaction with his ordinances and dispensations! Certainly not there, where the idea of God is a strange, troublesome, offensive inmate, where the laws of religion are deemed a burden, and exercises of devotion are thought confinement and constraint. Certainly not there, where indifference towards God, servile dread of God, apathy towards Jesus, antipathy to Jesus; where insensibility, envy, hatred, enmity to mankind chill and corrupt the heart! Neither likewise there, where, besides the case of bodily disorders and maladies, melancholy, churlishness, a gloomy, anxious, peevish disposition prevail, and unjust apprehensions at every word, at every step, of offending God, the All-gracious, and becoming criminal in his sight. No; the spirit of christianity is a spirit of faith, of devotion, of love, of joy! — Hence, my dear friends, ye may easily and infallibly perceive, whether the spirit of christianity resides and lives and governs in you; whether therefore ye be christians in earnest, or whether ye have only the name and the outward form. — If that faith, that hearty trust in God and in Jesus, that filial, cordial devotion, that all-vivifying and all-animating love and joy are extraneous and strange to you; or things whereof you have only at times, but rarely, had a faint sensation, an imperfect experience: oh then be not

surprised if the doctrines of christianity afford you not much light and warmth, if its commandments are grievous to you, if its promises yield you but little comfort, if in general you find not in christianity that calm serenity, that vital energy, that felicity which it holds out to its professors! As yet you know it only by name; as yet it is to you a dead letter without signification, a body without a soul!—First open your heart to this spirit of christianity, follow its dictates, allow yourself to be penetrated by its sentiments; then, and only then, will you truly understand, revere and love it, learn to enjoy it, experience its whole force and felicity. Oh do this, all you, my dear friends, that hear me, you that are styled christians and wish to be and to become happy, whether you be still merely nominal christians, or only novices in christianity, or are already practiced and confirmed christians. Strive all of you, henceforth and continually more for that light, that life, that force, that felicity, which the spirit of christianity produces in its genuine confessors.

Do this particularly you, my christian brethren, who mean now to come to the table of the Lord. If anywhere faith, devotion, love and joy should live and reign, it is here; here where everything incites us to them and confirms us in them! Yes, here the spirit of christianity, like the vivifying breath of the Almighty, should pervade and animate

mate us all! — Here are solid arguments for the faith and confidence that waver not! God, that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. His death is our life: his resurrection the pledge and surety of our's. — Here are incentives to devotion, that cannot leave us unmoved. To have fellowship with the Father and with his son Jesus, to draw nigh unto him as his children, and as brothers and sisters of his firstborn, to devote ourselves afresh to his service, to soothe ourselves in the assurance of his grace and favour, and to feel that we are in his nearer presence; who, in such circumstances, can be void of sincere and fervent devotion? — Here we find the most nutritious aliment of love! It is the feast of the love of God, the feast of the love of Jesus, the feast of the brotherly love which one christian owes to another! All, all invites us to it: let us love him because he first loved us! Let us love one another, as God, as Jesus, has loved us! — Here, in short, all encourages us to joy. God is our father; Jesus is our helper, our chieftain and lord; we are immortal; are rescued from the power of sin, from the dominion of death and the grave; pursue, under the view and protection of consummate wisdom and benignity, our journey of life; behold heaven standing open before us; and can now, whether we live or
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whether we die, without obstruction proceed from perfection to perfection, from happiness to happiness! And in this shall we not rejoice? — Yes, ye blessed inmates of the just, faith, devotion, love and joy! to you will we unfold the deepest recesses of our hearts, there will we prepare an abode, a temple for you; accompany us now at the table of our lord, inspire us with your suggestions all the days of our lives; your motives, your precepts, your influence will we willingly and readily obey, and your efficacy in us and through us shall prove, that where the spirit of christianity presides, there wisdom and virtue, liberty and felicity reign!

Whitsunday.

SERMON XXXV.

The Prudence of the Worldly-minded a Reproach to Christians.

GOD, by whom we exist and live, how can we make the best use, the use most agreeable to thee, of our life on earth? How most surely and completely answer the true end of it? How best qualify ourselves for a superior and better life after death? Ah, various are the paths along which we see mankind pursue their way! Extremely different and opposite the principles they follow and the objects they pursue! But various likewise are the deviations and perplexities into which they fall, and by which they fail of attaining their aim. Where is the rule that we may follow without danger, where the leader and guide whom we may safely trust? Where else than in those lessons of truth, which thy son Jesus brought us from heaven, and in the example which he, the way, the truth, and the life, has given us? Thy spirit, o God, which thou gavest to him, thy dearly beloved son, thou wilt not refuse to us thy children; and, supported by thee, the Almighty,

mighty, we, like him, shall triumph over every obstacle, shall overcome the world, and in righteousness and beneficence seek and find our satisfaction for ever ! Oh hearken to our prayer, according to the love that thou bearest unto thy people, and visit us with thy salvation ! Bless the discourse which thy servant is about to deliver, and vouchsafe us the mercies we further ask in the words of thy beloved son. Our father, &c.

The children of this world ~~are~~ in their generation wiser than the children of light.

MANKIND have often been reproached with holding a conduct inconsistent with their own maxims ; and daily experience teaches us that this reproach is by no means destitute of foundation. Do but compare the manner in which they pursue their temporal affairs and interests, and provide for their outward welfare, with the manner in which they answer the obligations of christianity, and labour at their spiritual and everlasting happiness. How often shall we see them do and neglect in this respect the direct reverse of what they do and neglect in the former ! Do they on one hand exert the utmost diligence in studying the businesses, the customs, the pleasures, the emoluments of this world, the road to riches, to honours, and to power ; on the other as to most
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of the objects which relate to their perfection and their peace of mind, they are contented to remain in ignorance, or sufficed with a very superficial knowledge. Nothing escapes their attention on one side, that can in any way promote or fix their temporal prosperity ; they are most sensibly vexed, whenever it is diminished or shaken ; and yet on the other side they are entirely cold and indifferent as to what concerns their everlasting salvation and the felicity of heaven, and bear without pain or uneasiness the greatest injuries to their soul. If on one hand they are vigilant, busy, laborious, unwearied, bold and resolute, when their temporal property and affairs are in question : yet are they on the other hand drowzy, sluggish, and pusillanimous ; they are all imbecillity and irresolution, when they are required to repudiate their bad habits, to strive against their failings, to conquer their passions, to fulfil the duties of a real christian, and thus to render themselves capable and worthy of a blessed immortality. In general they are well enough apprised that if we would attain some particular object we must use the subordinate means ; that we must be skilful, circumspect and diligent in the application of them ; that we must not allow ourselves to be intimidated and driven from our purpose by every impediment and difficulty that stands in the way ; that we must frequently relinquish a smaller advantage for the sake of a greater,

greater, and sacrifice a present transient gratification to a future and durable pleasure; and we daily follow these dictates of prudence in our temporal affairs. But when once these rules are to be applied to our spiritual and eternal concerns, we behave exactly as if we absolutely knew nothing of them, or as if we thought them inapplicable and false. Thus, my friends, do the generality of people contradict themselves, and daily act diametrically opposite to their own principles and rules of conduct, their own perceptions and feelings. A melancholy truth! How humiliating, how disgraceful to mankind! But how well adapted likewise to mortify their pride, to lead them to self-acquaintance, and to fill them with a salutary alarm at the danger of their moral condition! Oh that the consideration of this truth may make on all of us a suitable impression; oh that by its resplendent light it may dissipate the errors that blind us in this respect, rouse us from this foolish negligence in our main and final interests, awaken our slumbering consciences, and incite us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling! Towards the prosecution of these designs by the divine assistance and blessing I propose to do two things. First, I shall briefly elucidate the words of our text; and then I shall endeavour to unfold the truth of them in a constant regard to our own behaviour.

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The children of this world, says our saviour, are wiser in their generation than the children of light. These words relate to the allegory of the unjust steward, and must be elucidated from it. The unfaithful steward is called upon to give an account of the administration of the property committed to his charge, and was perfectly aware that he could not stand the inquiry, but that his office would be taken from him. He therefore devises means for securing himself against the want and misery that seem to threaten him. He comes to the resolution of attaching his master's debtors to him by an apparently generous remission of a considerable part of their debts, thereby to induce them afterwards to take care of him, and to let him share in the profits for which they were beholden to him. Though this procedure was in itself extremely unjust, yet it indicated great shrewdness in the art of resources, and of finding an escape in such situations as would throw a thousand others into the perplexities of despair. It was the procedure of a man that never lost the use of his reason and reflection at sight of the most imminent danger, and in the most distressing circumstances acted with all the prudence of a person whose mind and heart were in the utmost composure. The lord of this unjust steward could not refrain from applauding his conduct, so far as it was a proof of his prudence and ingenuity, without however approving of the unlawful means he

he had employed for avoiding his utter ruin. Hereupon our saviour makes the remark in our text: The children of this world, says he, are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Who are the children of this world? Who are the children of light? In what design does our divine teacher contrast them together? A few brief observations will be sufficient for replying to these questions.

The children of this world, my friends, are the persons who esteem, love and pursue only the riches, the honours and the pleasures of this earth; who make them their chief concern; who deem the possession and enjoyment of these vain and transitory things their sovereign good; and devote all their capacities, all their time, all their faculties, and frequently even the hope of future happiness, to those pursuits. The children of light on the contrary are they, who, enlightened by a divine revelation, understand their duties and their destination; who are instructed in the will of God, and in the means of approving themselves to him; who are fully persuaded that their soul is immortal, and that to this state of discipline and trial a state of retribution will succeed; who firmly believe all these things, think often on them, and likewise take more or less pains to live conformably to their belief. These are the persons whom Christ contrasts together in our text.

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The children of this world, says he, are wiser in their generation, or, in their way, namely, in their manner of thinking and acting, than the children of light, that is, the former are more attentive, more prudent, more dextrous, in managing their concerns and affairs, than the latter: the former discover an understanding, a prudence, an industry, a harmony of design and conduct, a zeal and constancy in the prosecution of their projects, which cannot easily be discerned in the latter: the children of light frequently commit such mistakes, and are guilty of such negligences, as the children of this world would never forgive themselves for. You may easily imagine, pious hearers, that this proposition, though couched in general terms, is not applicable to all the individuals without distinction, who belong to these two classes, but that many exceptions to the rule are found with regard to both. For as on one side there are worldly-minded men enough who are completely negligent as well towards their earthly and temporal, as their spiritual and eternal welfare, and by a senseless and infatuated conduct at one and the same time are bringing destruction on their outward prosperity, their health, their life and their soul; so on the other there certainly are sober and discreet persons, who endeavour just as diligently, just as zealously and resolutely, to answer their obligations, to work out their salvation, to become continually wiser and holier, to augment

ment the growing treasure of their good works, and to extend the empire of religion and virtue in the world, as the worldly-minded man can do for prosecuting the plans his pride or his ingenuity has formed. The proposition then contained in our text must be understood of what most commonly and frequently happens among the bulk of mankind; and in that sense it is but too true, that the children of this world are wiser in their way than the children of light. Of this, the following remarks will give us the most lamentable proof.

The children of this world, the worldly-wise, in the first place sedulously inform themselves of the things of this world, and of the methods we should take for succeeding in our designs. They pass whole years in studying whatever can best fit them for promoting their outward welfare, for successfully carrying on their trade and business, for obtaining and preserving certain posts and preferments. They neglect nothing that may enable them to gain a thorough insight into these matters, and the relations in which they stand to their happiness. They eagerly avail themselves of whatever may cast any light upon them; they call to their aid the ingenuity and experiments of others, who are older and wiser than they, and are constantly labouring to improve and complete the knowledge they have already acquired. Do we act thus, my friends, we, who are the chil-

dren of light, we who are christians? We are instructed, indeed, from our earliest infancy, in the principles and duties of religion; we are taught to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent; we are publicly instructed in his holy will; we are informed of his greatness and the wonders of his love; and we possess at home all the necessary helps for studying what will make us wise to salvation, by reading and reflection. But how do we employ these means of instruction, and what effects do they produce? Do we apply ourselves in good earnest to the study of religion, and to meditation upon it, and do we strive constantly more and more to get juster and clearer apprehensions of its salutary doctrines? Do we know God, and the relations we bear to him; do we understand what he has done for us, and what he requires of us, as the worldly man understands the world in which he lives, the connections in which he stands with other men and with society at large, and the duties incumbent upon him in virtue of those connections? Are we as well acquainted with the way that leads to virtue and to everlasting happiness, as the worldly-wise are with the means of arriving at the possession of the goods for which they are striving? Do we inquire about the impediments and difficulties we may meet with on that way, and the means of surmounting them, with as much solicitude as the children of this world inquire after what may be useful or prejudicial to them,

them, what may advance or impede the execution of their plans? Are we as docile and grateful as they, when any one points out to us certain dangers to which we rashly expose ourselves, and warns us of them; when he holds up to us what is faulty in our conduct, and shews us how much it is at variance with our duty and with our present or future happiness; when we are admonished, intreated, conjured, to stop short in our dangerous career, and retreat from the verge of the precipice, to which our carelessness and folly has brought us? Oh how much should the comparison humiliate and shame us! And yet what are all the speculations and knowledge and sagacity that relate solely to the world and the present life, what are they when set against those which concern us as christians that are called to immortality! How much more necessary and important are these than the former! How much wiser is a Paul, who knows nothing, and will know nothing, save the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified! How much wiser is he than the worldly man, who is ignorant as to the doctrine of salvation, but is thoroughly versed in the businesses and affairs of this life! Certainly it surpasses imprudence, it is among the prodigies of folly and indiscretion, to study with infinite pains what we can only make use of for a few days, and not to learn that, or not understand it thoroughly, which may make us for ever happy. Let us then

confess to our shame; that the children of this world are in this respect wiser than the children of light.

They are so, secondly, because they propose to themselves a certain determinate object, to which all their study and speculation are directed, and which they never lose sight of, let it be wealth, or power, or honours, or pleasure. The covetous man seeks only to enrich himself; to heap treasure upon treasure; and this is the concern that uniformly interests his heart, that is always uppermost, that constantly employs him. The ambitious man thinks only how he may distinguish himself from the crowd, raise himself above others, and increase or confirm his power and consequence; and all, that does not contribute to his elevation, he regards with perfect apathy and indifference. The voluptuary pursues only the pleasures to which he is addicted, and esteems neither wealth nor honours otherwise than as they may be subservient to the gratifying of his unbridled appetites. And this uniformity of purpose, this predominant and ever-active inclination to certain objects, this fixed resolution to possess them, is the cause why the children of this world labour with indefatigable diligence in the prosecution of their designs, boldly surmount the obstacles in their way, and frequently succeed in the most arduous enterprises. Do we resemble them likewise in this respect, pious hearers, we, who

who are the children of light? The will of God, and his gracious designs upon us, are not concealed from us. We know our high appointment. We know that we are immortal, and that our spirit is capable of a continually increasing perfection and of an everlasting doom. We know, that it is here we are to lay the foundation of our future perfection and happiness, and that we cannot do this, unless we secure the favour of God by faith and repentance, exercise ourselves in obedience to his commands, and frame our temper and our life by his good pleasure. Is this now the ultimate aim, the main point in all that we think and wish and do? Have we chosen the good part, that shall never be taken from us? Do we seek principally the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Do we prefer the divine favour and the hope of eternal life, do we prefer wisdom and virtue to all the possessions and honours of the world? Can we honestly say, I have sworn and am steadfastly purposed, to keep his righteous judgments? And if this be our object, the grand concern of our life, do we keep it continually in view? Do we frequently cast our eyes upon it? Do we regulate all our actions by it? Or are we still in doubt and uncertainty as to the party we should embrace, that of serving the Lord, or preferring the interests and honours of the world to his service? Yes, my friends, this unhappy dubiousness, this baneful uncertainty it is, that exposes

exposes many of us to the hazard of losing their souls. We are always standing as it were where two ways meet, the ways of good and evil, determining alternately one while for this and then for the other. We would wish to serve God and likewise the world: we would hearken to the divine commands, and at the same time do all that our sensual appetites suggest; we would form ourselves on the model of virtue and piety which Jesus has left us; and without that imitation it is impossible for us to be real christians, but we would likewise conform to the present world, and have not courage enough to distinguish ourselves from its children by a correct and godly course of life: we would indeed obtain the kingdom of heaven, yet not renounce for its sake the deceitful charms of sin. Thus are we still halting between God and the world, between virtue and vice. Thus do we consume our days in forming plans which we never execute, in adopting resolutions which we never carry to effect. Thus are we still striving in vain to unite the most opposite extremes, and to make things coalesce which are directly repugnant to each other. Need we then be surprised, if we are at all times exceedingly feeble and frail, continue always the servants of iniquity, if we make no progress on the paths of virtue and sanctification, if we never get nearer the perfection to which we are called? And can we here likewise refrain from making the humili-
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using confession, that the children of this world are wiser in their way than the children of light?

Nor is that all. The children of this world are not satisfied with proposing to themselves some determinate object, and at times looking steadily at it. They actually take the road that leads to it. They use all the means that can anywise tend to procure them the riches, the honours, the dignities, the pleasures they are in quest of. They examine with discriminating attention the various means that offer. They select from among them such as appear the safest and surest, though the most unpleasant and difficult; and they employ them with all possible dexterity and prudence, with all the assiduity they are able to exert. Repeated attempts, unremitting endeavours, severe and toilsome labours, inconveniencies, sleepless nights and restless days, are all thought little of, for completing their course, and for bearing away the prize. Do we labour in this manner at the salvation of our souls, pious hearers? Do we thus set at work all the means that God affords us for corresponding with our christian obligations? We are well acquainted with the prize for which we should contend as children of light; and I take it for granted that we actually do contend for it. What do we then for obtaining it? Which road do we take for reaching it? Do we peruse and consider the sacred writings in pure and honest inten-

intentions, and do we imbibe the instruction they contain with reverence, with docility, with submission? Do we assiduously apply ourselves to exercises of devotion and prayer both public and private, and do we this with that attention, with that humility, with that fervour, with that sincerity, which the idea of the divine majesty and the sentiment of our wants should inspire? Are we constantly watchful over ourselves and our conduct? Do we diligently strive to moderate our desires, to bridle our passions, to repress the first irregular movements that arise within, and so to acquire the command of ourselves? Do we abstain not only from evil, but also from the appearance of it? Do we industriously avail ourselves of all opportunities of instruction, of improving ourselves, of exercising ourselves in virtue, and in augmenting our treasure of good works? Do we scrupulously avoid whatever may lead us aside from the path of integrity, and do we particularly shun the bad companies which corrupt good manners? Do we exhort one another to perseverance in faith and in virtue, and do we hearken to those who rebuke us for our faults and correct us of our errors, with a meek and gentle spirit? These are the means of sanctification and happiness which we cannot neglect without coming short of the glorious prize that is set before us. If we are satisfied with confessing christianity with our mouths, with observing its outward

outward rites, with leading a life exempt from gross transgressions, and now and then performing a just or a generous action; if we do not earnestly strive to discharge all the duties whereof I have just been speaking, according to the best of our ability, and yet hope to be partakers in the inheritance of the saints hereafter: then is our behaviour manifestly inconsistent, and our hope without foundation. We would reach the end, without using the means whereby alone it can possibly be attained. We would lay hold on the prize, without taking the track that leads to it. We wish to bear away the victor's crown, and yet decline the conflict. What inconsistency! What infatuation! Are the children of this world so foolish and besotted in their kind as the children of light? No, they stop not at bare wishes, in fruitless resolves, in sluggish, broken, and interrupted efforts. They set all means to work for accomplishing their desires.

Yes, my friends, they employ all possible means for accomplishing their desires. This is the fourth feature that marks their character. They are steady in the prosecution of what they seek. They shun neither the pains nor toils which the execution of their plans may require. On the contrary, they rise up early, as the scripture speaks, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness. They let not every difficulty they desire deter them from their purpose. The greatest dangers, the

the most intimidating obstacles, have often no other effect than to redouble their attention, their vigilance, their efforts. They, without hesitation, expose themselves to those dangers, and encounter these obstacles, with boldness and resolution, though they have only in frequent instances the most distant hope of success. In vain would you attempt to persuade them to desist from their perilous enterprizes, or to moderate the ardour of their pursuits : in vain would you menace them with pains, with sicknesses, with a premature old age, an accelerated death : in vain would you recommend to them the comforts of a blameless, a peaceful and protracted life, as the fruit of a different conduct. They will despise both your threats and your promises ; they will rather abandon the most important advantages, and risk the most pungent distresses, than forego their main design ; and never will they think they have done enough, so long as anything remains for them to do. Do we recognize ourselves in these lineaments, my pious hearers, we who are the children of light ? Are we actuated by such a zeal, by such a courage, by such undaunted resolution in whatever can be made subservient to our eternal happiness ? Are we as firm and immoveable when we are decoyed to iniquity, or when we meet with obstructions on the path of duty ? Do we as much for religion and the life to come, as the children of this world do for the world and its transient

transient interests? Do we offer up to God such costly sacrifices as the worldling does to his favourite passion? Do we as carefully strive to render ourselves agreeable to our creator and lord, to the king of kings, to him who will hereafter determine our lot, as the ambitious man does to conciliate the favour of the lords of the earth? Are we as little satisfied with the progress we probably have made on the way of sanctification, as the avaricious man is with the wealth he has already amassed? Ah, my friends, how inconstant and wavering are we in what relates to our moral perfection and our everlasting salvation! How easily do we become sluggish and disheartened in this weightiest of all concerns. We repeatedly form the design, of forsaking our faults and transgressions, and of devoting ourselves to virtue: we often solemnly dedicate ourselves to God and his service: we endeavour for a while to fulfill our vows: we make some faint efforts for liberating ourselves from the tyranny of the passions. But how quickly do we forget those good resolutions, those solemn vows! How feeble and ineffectual are those attempts at amendment! The first obstacles we meet with deter us from the right onward course we were beginning to walk. The first temptations to evil beguile us; the first bad company that we happen to fall into, by its raillery, or by its flatteries, or by its contagious example, hurries us back to the follies and

and extravagancies which we had renounced but a few days or a few hours before; and thus we are constantly remaining where we were. What pusillanimity! What cowardice! Is this to be called striving to enter in at the strait gate, and taking the kingdom of heaven by violence? Is this to be called keeping the faith, fighting the good fight and finishing the course? Are not the children of this world also in this respect wiser in their way than the children of light?

Lastly, my friends, the children of this world frequently examine into the state of their transactions and affairs, and they do it with all the precision they are masters of. They compare what they have already done with what they have yet to do. They observe the mistakes they have heretofore committed, and the favourable opportunities they have neglected for advancing their fortune; and are firmly resolved in future to avoid the former, and better to avail themselves of the latter. Do we also follow these dictates of prudence, my friends, we, who should be enlightened and guided by the light of the gospel? Do we enter into serious expostulations with ourselves on the state of our hearts and the frame of our lives: on our progress in wisdom and virtue; on the grounds of our hope? To this end do we frequently retire from the noise of the world, and employ sufficient time in this difficult and momentous concern? But how shall we, how can we

we have leisure for these occupations, if we pass our lives in a round of dissipation, if we divide all the hours of the day between the duties of our temporal avocations and the pleasures of the world; if we fly from solitude as from the face of a serpent; if we are afraid of being left alone to our own thoughts and reflections; or, if we consume the precious moments for it, which we cannot avoid, in reading such books as may indeed amuse and divert us, but with respect to matters of the first concernment leave us in the grossest ignorance and the most dangerous indifference? It is true, there are times when we seem to confess and lament even these errors. When we meet with crosses and disappointments, or when we are preparing for the sacred supper, then we are less distracted; then for a day or two we alter our mode of life; then we accommodate ourselves to the occasion, and though perhaps not without reluctance and aversion, turn over some good book of morality or devotion; then we pass some few hours in retirement and prayer. But do we even at such times search and try ourselves with that attention, with that impartiality, with that severity, which alone can inform us of what we are, and what we have to hope for or to fear? Do we not rather seek to palliate our faults, to extenuate our vices, and to lull our awakened conscience again to sleep? And are these feeble attempts and efforts to come at the knowledge of ourselves, and

and to begin our amendment, fully commensurate with the importance of the object? And these exercises of devotion, which we so seldom repeat, which we perform with so much negligence and coldness, will they prove sufficient to secure us from self-deceit, to discover to us the secret corners of our heart, and enable us to form a correct judgment whether we are in that state and condition in which we ought to be, for being well-pleasing to God, and solaced with his grace and favour not only in the present, but likewise in the future life? Ah my friends! if we would follow the dictates of wisdom, ought we not daily, ought we not very frequently, to repeat these sacred exercises? Ought we not daily, ought we not very frequently, to examine our motives, our actions, the good and the ill that we have done? Can we neglect this duty without the utmost hazard, we who have here on earth such great and important business to transact; we whose lives are so short and precarious; we to whom the arbiter of the world may every moment say, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer steward? Would a man of the world, in similar circumstances and menaced with similar dangers, ever commit such gross and irreparable errors as these? No; the children of this world are wiser in their way than the children of light.

Let us then avow it, pious hearers, that the observation of Christ in our text is but too well-founded, and that our own behaviour furnishes us with the most melancholy proof of its truth and accuracy. Yes, let us avow it, however it may humiliate and confound us, that the children of this world in the management of their businesses and affairs, are wiser than the children of light. But let us not content ourselves with the bare avowal. The apprehension that we have hitherto acted with so little conformity to the wise and gracious designs of God, and no better employed the means of salvation he affords us, that apprehension should pierce us with the most poignant remorse, and induce us for the future to make a worthier and more faithful application of the means which God in his mercy has vouchsafed us for our instruction and improvement. The prudence, the industry, the diligence, the fortitude shewn by us in all that relates to the present life and our outward welfare, should cover us with shame and confusion at the supineness, the indifference and negligence, with which we provide for the perfection of our spirit and for our happiness in the life to come. These considerations should inspire us with a renovated ardour to devote ourselves entirely to God and to virtue, to forsake the sins which most easily beset us and render us slothful, and to run with constancy the race that is set before us. How unjustifiable will
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be our conduct, how righteous our condemnation, if we refuse to do, for God and for heaven, what the children of this world do for its wretched emoluments! Neither our infirmity, nor the difficulty of the business, be they both as great as they may, can excuse any negligence on our part. The christian can do all things through Christ which strengthens him; and the grace that we are offered on the part of God is mighty in the weak. The path of virtue and happiness is not more intricate, no, it is plainer than the way that leads to wealth, to preferments and posts of honour. If we have light and strength enough to follow the windings of this toilsome and gloomy labyrinth, so as to gain its prize, it is certainly our own fault if we have neither light nor strength sufficient for perfecting our holiness in the fear of the Lord. If we have resolution and courage enough to sacrifice, very often what we hold most dear, to the world, that ungrateful and perfidious despot, why should we be less resolute and intrepid, whenever required, to shew our submission and fidelity to God, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and leading a sober, a righteous and godly life? Trust me, my friends, if we as carefully and as constantly strive to advance the perfection of our spirit, to become wise and virtuous, and to deliver our immortal soul, as to preserve our health, our worldly possessions and our life; we may rest assured, that we shall as
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certainly, and infinitely more certainly, reach that aim than this. The success of the greatest and most obstinate industry that we can exert for acquiring what is visible and transient, is at all times uncertain, and we all must sooner or later lose the fruit of our labour; but our sincere and constant efforts for obtaining the invisible and heavenly goods, will infallibly be crowned with the most glorious success. After all that has been said can any doubt remain, which it is that merits our principal attention, our utmost affection, esteem, and diligence? Can we still hesitate one moment in preferring to the slight and fleeting distinctions of the earth, those substantial, durable and everlasting possessions that are reserved in heaven for us, and in making these the ultimate end, not only of our desires and affections, but also of our whole deportment? No, no, my friends, we will henceforth principally and constantly seek those things that are above, where Christ is, and not the things that are upon the earth. We will neglect nothing for securing the inheritance that passes not away, that awaits the righteous in the celestial abodes. We will walk circumspectly as the children of light, never be too secure, constantly watch, constantly pray, and still be urging on to greater perfection. Forgetting those things which are behind; after the example of that vigilant and laborious saint, we will reach forth unto those things which are before, and press toward

the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May he, that mighty and merciful God, who works in us both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure, confirm us in these noble resolutions, and grant us ability to pursue them with inflexible constancy and perseverance! Amen.

SERMON XXXVI.

The Grounds and Sources of christian Fortitude.

GOD, all thy commands are just and equitable, all thy ways are perfect wisdom and benignity. Both the one and the other are admirably adapted to our wants, to our abilities and circumstances, and to the ends of our being. Thou never requirest more of us than we can perform. Thou never layest on us heavier burdens than we are able to bear. Indeed the accomplishment of the duties that thou requirest of us, frequently to us appears grievous, and the sufferance of the afflictions which thou imposest on us, heavy. Indeed on the paths of virtue and happiness we often meet with obstacles and difficulties, that we cannot surmount and vanquish, without the exertion of our powers. Indeed the journey of life is frequently covered with darkness, and surrounded with dangers. But so it must needs be, if by discipline and exercise we are to reach our superior destination, if we would inviolably adhere to thee, learn to obey thee and trust in thee, and become

as good and perfect as we are capable of becoming. And how great the encouragements, the assistance, the refreshments, which thy wise bounty offers to us in nature and in religion! What sources of courage and resolution hast thou in both respects opened to us! Yes, it is by our own blamable conduct, if we notwithstanding are dispirited and dismayed, if we deem thy commandments a grievous yoke, and thy dispensations an oppressive burden. Oh teach us then thoroughly to perceive and feel, what, supported and invigorated by thee, as men and as christians we are able to do and to endure; and grant that we may always more diligently and faithfully employ the means thou affordest us for the refinement of our sentiments and the elevation of our faculties, and thus confidently pursue and happily finish our course. Bless even now our reflections on these important topics, and grant that they may inspire us with fortitude and resolution. We implore it of thee, as thy children, in dutiful submission to thy will, and address thee further as we are taught by Jesus. Our father, &c.

2 TIM. II. 3.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

FORITITUDE and resolution are undoubtedly qualities very requisite to man in several respects and in various occurrences of life. He has need

of fortitude and resolution if he intends to dedicate himself entirely to virtue, if he means to lead a truly virtuous life. For, then he will have at one time violent passions to contend with, at another indolence and listlessness to overcome; at another to fight against the authority of the reigning bad example, of the generally adopted principles and practices. Now he must oppose himself to the torrent of moral corruption that impetuously carries all before it; then conquer the remonstrances, the scorn, the ridicule of his acquaintance, of his companions, of his contemporaries. Often must he quit himself well of his duty and do good, without any apparently beneficial effects; often sacrifice to virtue some advantages, pleasures, prospects, connections. All this unquestionably requires fortitude and resolution. The diffident, the timid, the versatile will seldom resolve on that contest, and seldomer come off victorious. But mankind have need likewise of fortitude and resolution for bearing and suffering. Even the life of the most prosperous is never entirely free from troubles and afflictions. Every state, every calling, every manner of life has its particular limitations and burdens. Virtue has likewise her's. And who is at all times safe from particular casualties, from extraordinary calamities, from unusual and complicated sufferings? He that is then deficient in fortitude and resolution, is doubly pressed by these hardships and burdens;

burdens; they will crush him; every affliction will assail him like a hurricane, and plunge him in the abyss of despair. Only the brave, only the resolute can meet affliction without consternation and amazement, can consider and examine it with calm deliberation, take it patiently, bear it manfully, and therefore lighten the burden of it in various ways. In both respects then we may with great propriety address mankind in the words of our text: Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ: do what as a christian thou hast to do, and bear whatever as such thou shalt be called to bear, with fortitude and resolution, as becomes a confessor and follower of Jesus.

But whence shall mankind derive that fortitude and that resolution in doing and suffering, my pious hearers? From what sources are they to be drawn? This is the subject which we will now consult upon. We will inquire what it is that generally communicates fortitude, and what therefore can impart to a man the necessary fortitude for the faithful discharge of his duty even in the most critical conjunctures, and for bearing even the most grievous afflictions. The better we are acquainted with these sources, the easier it will be for us to draw from them, as often as we have occasion.

The first, and that a very abundant source of courage or fortitude is the instinctive sense of native

tive force. It is this sense that animates the lord of the forests, the king of beasts, the lion, boldly to rush on every danger and intrepidly to encounter every foe. It is this sense and apprehension that distinguishes the hero from the dastardly soldier, when he sedately arms himself for the bloody combat, and without dismay sees death approach him in a thousand ghastly forms. This sense is possessed by everyone in a greater or less proportion; and everyone has it in his power to rouse and increase it in his breast, by reflecting on what he is and has and is able to perform. For each of us has various energies within him, and each of us can augment his powers by exercise and exertion, frequently to an incredible degree of force.—If you would have courage for the christian warfare, my dearest friends, you must rouse and cherish this inbred feeling. Beware of thinking meanly of mankind in general, or of yourselves in particular. Think not to honour or to vindicate the creator, by imagining mankind, his creatures, to be totally unnerved and impotent to all grand and generous exploits. Neither suppose that the conviction of your power is pride. It could only be so if you were blindly to rely upon it, to account it your own inherent property, and to lose sight of God from whom it proceeds, by whom it is preserved, and on whom it depends. No; to hold our power as nothing and ourselves as weaker and more impotent than we really

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really are ; to assume and trust less to ourselves than we may reasonably do, is not humility ; it is self-deceit, ingratitude towards God, contempt and neglect of his gifts ; it is the direct way to become actually as wretched, as impotent, as we groundlessly conceive ourselves to be. No ; as certainly as the creator has destined man to various labours, to arduous and perilous undertakings, as certainly as he has surrounded him with many enemies and dangers : so certainly has he furnished him likewise with faculties that are adequate to those labours, those enterprises, those enemies and dangers. And in fact, my dearest friends, what is there that man cannot do ? What can he not bear and suffer ? What energies, what latent resources has he not within himself ? Of what exertion, of what obstinate unconquerable fortitude is he not capable ? He frequently imagines himself not competent to some particular undertaking, some particular business, sees nothing but deterring obstacles and difficulties before him ; and when the time is come that he must put his hand to the work, when he is incited to it by powerful motives, and he deems it to be an indispensable duty to do it, then all these obstacles and difficulties vanish gradually from his view, he surmounts and conquers them all, and finishes that with complete success, which at first appeared to him so difficult and almost impossible. Thus he frequently imagines that

that he should not be able to endure such or such a misfortune, that he could not sustain some particular privation, some particular affliction, and when he meets with that loss, when that affliction comes upon him, when that misfortune befalls him, then impelled by distress and danger, he rallies all his forces for bearing that burden, for enduring that pain, and often feels more courage and strength within him, than he could ever have supposed.

A second not less abundant source of courage and resolution is the assurance of a near and powerful assistance. How unconcerned, how dauntless is the child in the arms of his mother, in the hand of his father! How unconcerned, how intrepid is the mean man by the side of his protector and patron, the weak man by the side of a hero, the friend by the side of his friend! And we, my dearest friends, what an assistance have we to rely upon, if we make it our serious business to live and to suffer as christians, and in all things to comply with the will of God! It is the assistance of the Almighty, to whom nothing is impossible, who can do infinitely more than we can ask or conceive; the assistance of the Omnipresent, who is never far from any one of us, in whom and by whom we are and live and act; the assistance of the All-gracious, who never suffers us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear; never lays burdens upon us that we have not strength

strength to sustain; the assistance of our father in heaven, who knows and loves us his children, and leads us as it were by the hand to the goal of perfection. And shall we ever be wanting in courage and resolution, if we truly fulfil the will of our heavenly father in the calling which he has assigned us, if we do what he enjoins us to do, and bear what he lays upon us to bear? If he, the Almighty, be for us, who can be against us? If he cover us with his protection, how calmly may we behold any danger, any misfortune approach, and how firmly be assured, that he will either avert from us that danger, that misfortune, or as-

us to bear and to conquer it, or make it subservient to our perfection, conducive to a superior, a better life! If he strengthen and support us, what may we not attempt and accomplish, bear and suffer! What duty will then be too hard for us, what sacrifice, that he requires of us, too dear? Is not his strength mighty even in weakness? Can and will he ever forsake him who adheres to him and trusts in him? Is his arm ever shortened, that he cannot save? Knows he not the issues of death? Yes, to him let us adhere, in his grace let us solace our minds, secure to ourselves his good pleasure and assistance by virtue and godliness, and then in every conflict we shall be able to persist, to overcome all things, and bear away the victor's crown.

A third

A third source of courage and resolution is the certainty of success. This certainty can rarely be had in worldly affairs and enterprises. Here we are usually obliged to work at a venture, to risk our time and abilities and ease and pleasure and health and life in uncertainty. Perhaps, say we, it may turn out well; perhaps we shall attain our ends; perhaps we shall reap and enjoy the fruits of our labour. The object is well worth hazarding something for, we need not grudge bestowing time and pains upon it. This is commonly all that we have to incite us to industry and firmness in toilsome and hazardous enterprizes. And how powerfully does this "perhaps," this more or less probable expectation, operate on mankind! If however mere possibility, a slight degree of probability is able to do so much, what effects ought not certainty of success to produce, my dearest friends? And this we have in regarding the exertions, the pursuits, the enterprizes to which we are summoned as christians. We fight, we run, we labour not as uncertainly. Our destination is not doubtful, the termination of our warfare not dubious. No; as certainly as we walk the way appointed us by God, and persevere in it to our dying day, so certainly will it lead us to the point that we wish to attain. As certainly as we continually and earnestly fight against our lusts and passions, the temptations and allurements to sin, so certainly shall we conquer them and enjoy the sweets

sweets of victory and freedom. As surely as we sincerely and earnestly strive to become wise and virtuous, and by wisdom and virtue to be well-pleasing to God and capable of the felicity of heaven, so surely shall we attain those noble ends and always make nearer approaches to christian perfection. As surely as by persevering industry in good works we labour after honour and glory and immortality, so surely will God confer upon us everlasting life. As surely as we here contend and suffer with Christ and like him, so surely shall we live and reign with him hereafter. Conflict and victory, seed-time and harvest, virtue and felicity succeed immediately on each other. They are both in their very nature and in virtue of the ordinations and promises of God, the infallible God, inseparably allied. And what courage, what resolution should this certainty of success communicate to us! With it what are we not able to do and to suffer, if from entire conviction we can exclaim with the apostle: I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day: for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our lord.

A fourth

A fourth source of courage and resolution is the expectation of greater advantages and recompenses. What will not the ambitious man do, in order to raise himself in the world? To what dangers does he not expose himself in climbing the steep ascent to honour, to power and authority? What other passion has he not the art of taming and keeping under controul? What restraints does he not submit to on a hundred occasions! How accurately he regulates himself by the inclinations of his superiors! How readily he surrenders his own ease and accommodations! What occupations, what labours that promise him profit and fame are too toilsome and arduous for him! Of what persevering exertion is he not capable in scaling the lofty pinnacle on which he has fixt his views! And what will not the covetous man do in order to accumulate riches! To what troubles, to what fatigues, to what servile labour will he not submit to attain his ends! What severities he exercises on himself! How insensible he is to all the blandishments of ease, of convenience, of pleasure! And what, after all, are the privileges which the former, and the riches which the latter acquires? They seldom obtain the object for which they have been striving; seldom do they find it, when near, so brilliant, so beautiful, so desirable as it appeared to them when afar off; and no sooner have they obtained it, than they run the risk of being robbed of it and of losing the fruit of their labour

labour and toil. What quite different profits and recompenses have we to expect, my dearest friends, if as christians we manfully sustain the glorious warfare against sin, finish our course with unabated ardour, and are found faithful in the sight of God! With what radiance the crown of virtue shines before us, which the fountain of all moral excellence, the judge of the world will bestow upon us hereafter! To have our brows bound with those victorious wreaths, the glorious, the unfading crown! What exertion, what conflict, what sacrifices, what sufferings are now too great? With what fortitude, with what resolution ought we to be animated by such prospects, such expectations! When the object is real, permanent honour, honour in the sight of God, promotions of the spirit, which are immortal as itself; when the object is everlasting, uninterrupted happiness, a happiness as great as it is undecaying: what should we not be ready and resolved to venture, to undertake, to do, to bear, to suffer! Yes, let us turn our thoughts on that great day of retribution, whenever we find it difficult to comply with our duty, and are obliged to sacrifice some interest or pleasure to it. Let us represent to ourselves the blessings and joys of the harvest, when we at present are obliged to till the ground and sow it with much labour and often without visible success. Let us never lose sight of the goal to which the road of christian virtue leads, though
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the way at times seems rough and toilsome, if we have to contend with lofty mountains, steep rocks, impetuous torrents, and meet with acclivities, pitfalls, and dangers upon it. What is the labour of a few years when compared with the wages of eternity? What are the afflictions of the present time in comparison with the glory that is reserved for the christian, tried by sufferings and found faithful?

A fifth circumstance that imparts to us courage and resolution for doing and suffering is, if it happen in the presence of such persons of whose judgment and approbation we make great account, on whose complacency and favour much of our happiness depends. What is the subject not in a condition to do, if the eyes of his prince are directed to him and give him signs of approbation and encouragement? What will not the soldier endure, what dangers will he not face, when fighting in view of his commander, and having him for the witness of his exploits? How great then, christians, how immovable ought our courage and our resolution to be, since we are at all times and in all places, in the darkness of the night as in the splendour of the day, in the deepest solitude as in the most numerous assembly, under the inspection and in the presence of God, our sovereign master and judge, our supreme benefactor and gracious parent; since we have him for the witness of our behaviour, who knows our thoughts

thoughts and intentions as well as our words and actions, and whom no false appearance can deceive, him who always judges right and with whom is no respect of persons, and who is the sole, the eternal source of our being, of our life and our enjoyments? Yes, the thought that God beholds thee, o man, with complacency beholds, and that he approves thy conduct, when thou controullest thyself, overcomest the world, preferrest thy duty to every advantage, to every pleasure, and dost what he orders thee to do, however difficult and laborious, with a prompt and cheerful obedience: this thought must and will refresh thee even in retirement, even amidst the ingratitude of the world, even under the defect of all outward encouragements, the most pertinacious opposition of the adversaries of goodness, and never suffer thee to be faint or weary in justice, rectitude and humanity. The thought that God beholds thee, when thou sufferest, that he beholds thee with complacency, when thou sufferest with patience and fortitude, and that he even then loves thee with parental tenderness, when he inflicts on thee a variety of evils for thy discipline and correction: this thought should and will render every affliction tolerable, and enable thee to surmount it, how grievous soever it may be. Yes, let us continually walk before the face and in the presence of God, continually fix a keen and steady look on him and endeavour to please him. so shall we
never

never be cast down, never be dispirited, so will the edifice of our virtue and our happiness stand fast and continue for ever.

It also, sixthly, gives us courage and resolution in doing and suffering, when we have before us the example of others who have successfully done the same that we have to do, and have firmly borne and resolutely outstood the same sufferings that press upon us. And are we deficient in such examples, my dearest friends? What illustrious patterns of righteousness and fidelity, of virtue and piety, of patience and fortitude do the sacred records present us with in the person of an Abraham, of a Moses, a Job, a Daniel, in the persons of the apostles of our lord and many of his primitive confessors! And what examples of this sort find we not even in profane history, among men and nations who had neither the light, nor the motives, nor the helps and resources to good that we have! What proofs of peculiar vigour of mind, of inviolable integrity, of invincible patience in afflictions have they exhibited to the honour of human nature and to the excitement of its latent energies! And may not every one of us know some persons among his friends, his acquaintance, fellow-subjects, contemporaries, who have excelled in courage and resolution, who have attempted and achieved important and arduous enterprises, surmounted extraordinary dangers, vigorously sustained tedious and poignant afflictions,

tions, and all this with unabated ardour, fraught with confidence and hope? And should not each individual hence draw this encouraging inference: what they, what these who are my fellow-beings, who are my brethren, have done and endured, cannot I also do and endure, I who am a man like them, a christian like them, who feel the same energies within me, have the same prospects before me, and may trust in the same assistance from on high? The more vestiges of antecessors and conquerors, who were in all things like me, that I perceive on my way, the more securely may I pursue it, the more certainly promise myself that by it I shall not fail of the mark. — — And how particularly resplendent to my view are the vestiges of Jesus, my leader and lord, on the path of duty and virtue! What did he not venture, sacrifice, do and suffer for the benefit of mankind! What was ever able to appall his courage, or exhaust his patience? How undauntedly did he persevere unto death, even the death of the cross! And has he not left me his example to the end that I should intimately apprehend the dignity and the destination of my nature, and invigorated by that apprehension, tread in his footsteps and follow him? Yes, my dearest friends, if we are deficient in courage and resolution to act and to suffer, let us look to that cloud of witnesses, to that multitude of combatants and conquerors, who have finished their course before us, and are

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now as it were spectators and judges of our conflict: but principally let us direct our view to Jesus, our leader and forerunner, who in a course of the most magnanimous virtue and the holiest obedience, heeded neither trouble nor toil, neither ignominy nor pain, and now sits at the right hand of the father, where he gathers together all those who follow him, and seek their glory and their felicity in so doing.

Lastly, my pious hearers, we may derive more or less courage and resolution from our own experiences. Is it easy to find a person who has not already brought some difficult, laborious enterprises to effect, undergone and endured several severe, oppressive afflictions? How oft has the path of our life been beset with difficulties and obstacles, which we scarcely could hope to conquer and surmount, which yet we happily conquered and surmounted? How oft has the darkness that surrounded us, through which we were unable to descry a single outlet on any side, given way all at once to a resplendent light; the trouble that sat heavy on us at night been converted into joy in the morning; the sorrow that transpierced our hearts subsided into content and acquiescence! How many complicated plans have we not already executed! How many works and businesses, the sight of which has often confounded us, have we not successfully terminated! How many dangers and calamities have we already en-

countered! How many misfortunes and sicknesses have we already outstood! And yet our powers are not exhausted. They have rather been strengthened by exercise, and the wisest and best application of them must therefore be continually facilitated. And if we be christians, christians who bear that name in sincerity and in truth, what encouraging experiences must we likewise in this respect have had, how many victories must we already have gained over ourselves, our lusts and passions, how many freewill-offerings have we joyfully made to our consciences and to our duty, how often in the most critical conjunctures submitted with filial confidence to the will of our father in heaven and resigned ourselves without opposition to his guidance and direction, how often placed ourselves in that frame of mind, that we could contentedly follow his summons to every virtue, to every trial, even to death! Oh let us frequently call to mind these victories, this progress on the way of christian perfection, whatever, by the gracious assistance of the Almighty, we have hitherto attempted, accomplished, borne, suffered, all this let us recall to our memories, when our courage begins to fail and our constancy to shake, and from the review of the past collect hope and energy for the future. Yes, the farther we are already advanced on our career; the more of the like trials we have before us: so much the more securely and indefatigably let us continue
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that career, and so much the less doubt that we shall bring it to a prosperous termination under the auspices and the protection of the Most High.

And these, o man, o christian, are the several sources whence thou mayst draw courage to act and to suffer, courage to the faithful discharge of thy duty, and courage to endure the most grievous afflictions. How various, how abundant! Oh let them not offer thee their spirit and their force in vain! Draw from them the courage thou art in want of, that thou mayst behave as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Continually excite and support in thy breast the sentiment of thy dignity and thy power: assure thyself of the assistance of the Almighty, who is ever able and willing to help: anticipate the good success of thy earnest exertions to become wise and virtuous, and by wisdom and virtue to reach the true end of thy being: comfort thyself in the prospect of the grand privileges and rewards that are laid up for the righteous in the future world: walk perpetually in the presence of God, and never forget that he, thy sovereign, thy judge, thy father, beholds whatever thou dost and sufferest: let the example of the wise and good, that have lived before thee, and are still alive, be continually present to thy mind; look at the noble company of just men made perfect, who are arrived at the term by the very road that thou art travelling, and now enjoy the recompense of their fidelity;

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look unto Jesus, who cleared for thee that way, and travelled it before thee; lastly, consult thy own experience, and conclude from what thou hast already done and endured, concerning what thou art still able to do and to endure. So wilt thou assuredly never be deficient in courage and resolution. So wilt thou freely and joyfully do and suffer, what as a christian thou hast to do and to suffer, and hereafter reap the fruits of thy fortitude and fidelity.

SERMON XXXVII.

Religion the constant Guide and Friend of Man.

GOD, thou hast formed us all for happiness, hast made it the end and aim of our being, and implanted in our hearts an ardent, inextinguishable appetite for it. But how could we obtain that object, how satisfy that craving desire without thy succour? We are poor, weak, ignorant, extremely fallible beings, easily deceived by false appearances, seduced by error, blinded and fettered by fallacious lusts and passions. Our path of life is encompassed with many obscurities, with stumbling-blocks and dangers. We frequently lose sight of our mark, frequently seek it in quite opposite directions. How necessary to us is a steady light, a faithful counsellor and guide! And that hast thou, eternal thanks be to thee for it, most merciful God, that hast thou actually granted us, adapted to our necessities and to our condition. In religion we have that tutor and guide of which we have so much need. To that end hast thou sent her from heaven to us on earth. Enlightened

by her, we can never go astray ; conducted by her we can never miss our mark. Invigorated by her we can overcome all things, do and suffer all things that carry us nearer and nearer to our accomplishment. Oh grant that we may entirely and for ever commit ourselves to her guidance and tuition, that we may take her for our constant, inseparable companion on the journey of life, that we may diligently attend to her voice, and unreservedly follow her dictates, even her gentlest suggestions and inspirations, that she may be and afford to us what she is intended to be and to afford, that by her we may all become as wise, as good, as happy, as persons knowing thee, and holding correspondence with thee, can become. Bless in this view the considerations that are now to employ our thoughts, that by them we may become more conversant with the religion that we profess and more susceptible of its sacred influence. These our petitions we present unto thee as the votaries of thy son Jesus, and, in perfect reliance on his promises, we farther call upon thee in the form which he himself prescribed. Our father, &c.

PSALM CXIX. 105.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

THAT religion should be and afford to you, my pious hearers, what it is designed to be and to afford to mankind ; that it should render you as wise,

wise, as good, as contented, as happy as it is able to render you and as you wish to become : you must not, as we have often already told you, separate it from any part of your lives ; not consider it as a business at one time necessary, at another unnecessary, now useful, then useless, now agreeable, then burdensome. You must not confine your meditations on its doctrines, your observance of its precepts, your repose in its consolations, to certain times and places or to particular emergencies. Those doctrines, those precepts, those consolations must never be foreign from you, they must be continually present to your mind. You must connect religion with all that you think and do and whatever betides you. She must be your constant companion, your monitor, your friend, your guide, your comforter. And this she can only be inasmuch as you submit to be taught, directed, led and guided by her in matters of daily and common occurrence, in the ordinary course of life as well as in the stated seasons of public worship, in your houses and shops as well as in the church, in company as well as in retirement, in the enjoyment of prosperity as well as under the pressure of affliction. If you have a friend, my pious hearers, whose friendship you reckon a principal ingredient in your happiness, are you satisfied with showing him at stated times in a cold and formal manner your esteem and affection, and then think no farther of him, talk no more

more about him, inquire no more after him, do or neglect nothing in reference to him? Does not the thought of your friend, if he be actually worthy of your heart, insinuate itself and mingle in all that ye think and say and do? Does it not accompany you everywhere? Is he not at all times welcome to you? Do ye ever lose sight of his designs, of his interests, or the good advice, the suggestion, the commission he has given you, the requests or solicitations he has made to you? Is anything that concerns your friend foreign and indifferent to you? Do ye shun and avoid his presence and his intercourse? Do you not rather seek them? Do ye not chuse to converse with him as often and as long as you can? Or, if ye have a guide on a road which you are unacquainted with and may easily mistake, will ye be satisfied with taking from him at times a few general instructions concerning the different situations of the places in the country to which you are bound and on the track that leads to it, and then care no more about him, but wilfully strike off into the first opening that invites you either by its pleasantness or its accommodations? Do ye not rather wish that your guide should constantly attend you till he has brought you safe to the place where you would be? Do ye not consult him at every turning? Does it not ever you to see him constantly before you or walking by your side, and does not this facilitate every step that you take?

take? And exactly thus, my pious hearers, does the matter stand with religion. Such a friend, such a guide should religion be, for being truly useful and consolatory to us, for actually improving, soothing, and delighting us. She should, as it is expressed in our text, be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Let us farther pursue this sentiment, my pious hearers. Let us, in the first place, see how we should associate religion with everything, and make her our familiar friend, the guide of our life; and then how many and what cogent reasons we have for so doing.

Religion should be our monitor and guide in our employments, our attendant in company, our companion in solitude, she should be the partner of our joys, and our comforter in distress. Five particulars, which we shall endeavour to illustrate.

Wouldst thou then, my christian brother, wouldst thou make religion the guide of thy life, wouldst thou have her truly to be a lamp to thy feet and a light to thy path? Then associate her with all thy occupations. In them let her be thy perpetual monitor. Consult her often, consult her particularly on every critical and dubious conjuncture, and ask her always in the sincere intention of following her dictates; how thou shouldst regard and prosecute thy affairs, in what dispositions thou shouldst transact them, what views thou shouldst have in them, how thou shouldst begin
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and finish them, what thou shouldst do and omit at every juncture, in every place, suitably to the particular emergency? She will always reply to thee in a language too plain to be mistaken: Let the duties of thy station, of thy calling, of thy office, whatever its nature, be sacred to thee! God has assigned it to thee, and to him, not only to mankind, but to him, the Omniscient, the Holy and the Just, must thou give an account of the administration of it. Let neither envy, nor jealousy, nor self-interest, nor covetousness, nor ambition actuate thee in thy occupations. Prosecute them, not simply from necessity, not from compulsion, not with repugnance and disgust, but let a rational self-love, a generous philanthropy, obedience towards God, thy creator and lord, be thy inducements and supports. Consider the work, the business thou hast to execute, as the task that thy father in heaven has set thee, his son, for the benefit of his whole family as well as thy own, and thus dignify and facilitate to thyself the performance of it. Transact all thy affairs, in the view of corresponding with the will of God, of exercising thy faculties, and of perfecting them by practice, and of promoting the welfare of thy brethren. Transact them all in a constant and uniform reference to God, under a sense of thy dependence on him and his blessing and his support, in childlike submission to his sovereign wisdom, by which he sometimes encourages the
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the plans and pursuits of mankind, at others checks them, now frustrates them, then crowns them with the most prosperous issue. While engaged in thy work, while immersed in thy business, occasionally lift up thy heart to God, often say to thyself, God wills that I should do this and omit that, that I should bear this and suffer that, that I should here labour and sow without entertaining any sanguine hopes of success, and there sacrifice my profit or my pleasure to others. God sees me and knows me, he understands and directs all that I think and do ; and so let the apprehension of his presence and superintendence secure thee from every, even the most secret fraud, from every, even the most concealed iniquity, and incite thee even then to conscientiousness, to equity, to fidelity, to veracity, to generosity, to beneficence, when thou hast no human being to witness those acts and sentiments. Be careful and punctual, though not anxiously so ; be industrious and indefatigable, but sedate in all thy avocations and affairs : let neither difficulties nor obstructions dishearten thee, and calmly leave the success and the consequences of them to him who governs all things and among them thee and the events of thy life. Let work be agreeable and dear to thee as work, activity as activity, a busy life as a busy life, even though thou art able to procure from it little benefit to thyself and others. Never forget that respecting our real perfection and happiness,

piness, it is of far, far greater moment, how we do what we are bound to do than what we operate and bring to effect by it without us ; and imprint it deeply on thy mind, that no faithful employment of our faculties, no honest effort to do and to promote good, is lost either to ourselves or to the world. Begin therefore all things with God, look in all things to him, assure thyself in all things of his approbation and complacency, and complete all things as far and as well as providence allows thee. Thus will religion conduct thee in the management of thy affairs, combining them all with the apprehension of God and his relations to thee, and thereby stamp a value and a dignity upon them which nothing besides can do. Thus wilt thou do that and only that which God enjoins thee to do, and constantly so do it as is agreeable and well-pleasing unto him. Thus wilt thou live and work not solely for thyself, but also for others, not solely for thy outward but also for thy inward and spiritual interests, not solely for the present but also for the future ; and never will it seem grievous to thee to make any sacrifice to thy conscience and to the benefit of society, which duty and virtue may require.

Wouldst thou further, my christian brother, associate religion with thy whole life, and make her thy inseparable friend and guide ; then let her be thy constant companion in society, thy counsellor in thy intercourse with others. Ask
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her how thou shouldst regard, judge of, treat mankind, thy brethren, how thou shouldst be disposed and behave towards them. She will answer, sometimes in a lower, sometimes in a louder tone, but always intelligibly enough; esteem and love them as thy brethren and sisters, as children of thy father in heaven, as thy fellow-redeemed, as co-heirs of thy future glory. Acknowledge and respect all the beautiful and good and excellent that they possess, all their natural dispositions and faculties and capacities, all their acquired and generally useful talents and endowments; acknowledge and honour in them the image of God and their destination to immortality. View them all without envy, without jealousy, with inward complacency, with heartfelt delight. Not only do them justice, but be candid, be kind, be generous towards them. Disparage and obscure not their excellencies and merits, exaggerate not their defects and infirmities, but set the former in the most favourable light, and palliate the latter as far as thou canst. Criticise them not with unkind severity, but with brotherly lenity and indulgence. Judge not, that thou be not judged. Rejoice not in the evil but in the good, explore not the former but the latter. Believe and hope always the best, and rather acquit the guilty than incur the danger of condemning the innocent. Respect and honour man as man, and never disown thy brother even in the vilest garb, in the meanest

meanest attire, in the deepest obscurity. Look not merely at what he at present is and does, but likewise at what he may be and do, and hereafter, sooner or later, infallibly will be and do. — — Behave thyself, will religion farther admonish thee, behave to everyone as thou wouldst reasonably desire that others should behave towards thee. Require not that respect, that service, that complaisance, that candour and indulgence from others, which thou wouldst not readily afford them. Give as freely as thou receivest, and reckon it more blessed to give than to receive. Leave and give to everyone, the poor as well as to the rich, the low as well as to the high, what is their due; let the life, the health, the reputation, the honour, the pleasure, the property, the morals, the religion of every one be sacred and inviolable to thee. Be grateful to thy benefactor, patient with the erroneous and frail, magnanimous to thy offender, conciliating to thy enemy, beneficent to all. Allow not thyself to be exasperated, to be instigated to ~~me~~ and revenge, requite not evil with evil, but overcome evil with good. Inform the ignorant, strengthen and support the feeble, comfort the mourner, relieve the poor and needy, rouse the slothful, encourage the faint-hearted, advise the troubled and distressed, endeavour to correct the bad, to confirm the good, and administer to everyone according to the endowments thou hast received of God. Be respectful to thy
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superiors, condescending and affable to thy inferiors, gentle and liberal to thy equals, indulgent, peaceable, helpful to all thy brethren, and be before-hand with every one in urbanity and complaisance.—Let all thy discourse be modest, inoffensive, instructive, let it be affectionate and seasoned with salt. Avoid lying, slandering, backbiting, acrimonious ridicule, biting jeers, all indecent and low jesting. Never sacrifice truth to wit, never the good fame of thy neighbour to the desire of pleasing and amusing. Never speak without reverence of God and religion, never without concern of suffering innocence and virtue, never without cordial satisfaction of any good that is done or enjoyed by thy brother, never without righteous indignation of the ravages and triumphs of folly and vice. Dissemble not, flatter not, be always what thou seemest, and always seem what thou art. Be circumspect, but not suspicious; prudent, but not artful; wary, but frank and sincere. Let truth and love, love to God and man, be the soul of all thy words and actions, and those as well as these be beneficial and generally useful. If these precepts, these inspirations of religion accompany thee at all times, from what miscarriages, from what disgraces and reproaches wilt thou be secure! How safely and cheerfully walk among thy brethren! How many innocent, real pleasures communicate to them and receive from them!

How agreeable and useful wilt thou render social life to them and to thyself.

Wouldst thou thirdly, my christian brother, associate religion, agreeably to the design of it, with thy whole life, and thereby experience its efficacy to thy improvement and composure; let her be thy friend and companion in solitude. There hearken with greater seriousness and attention to her suggestions, her doctrines, her encouragements, her consolations, her demands. There grow more and more conversant with her and always enjoy more completely the happiness of her converse. Accompanied by her, solitude will never be a burden, never prove tiresome or tedious to thee. Informed and entertained by her, the solemn hours of silence will be thy most delightful hours of recreation. Never will she permit thee to misemploy those holy hours in hatching unjust or malicious projects, in inventing schemes of artifice and fraud, never let thee cherish in them any dark and splenetic grudge, any carking care, any vexing jealousy, any resentments of affronted pride, never allow thee to consume them in voluptuous indulgences, in feeding an insatiable revenge, or in humouring any other degrading passions. No, she will constantly offer thee such proposals, awaken in thee such sentiments, open to thee such prospects, persuade thee to such practices, as will elevate thy mind, enlarge thy

thy heart, and ensure thee profit and joy. Now she will set thy troubled soul at rest, raise thy depressed spirits, excite in thee a noble apprehension of thyself, by teaching thee to judge differently and more justly of what beguiles, or perplexes, or torments thee. Then will she dissipate the dazzling pomp of station, of rank, of outward distinctions, of dissimulation and flattery by which thou wert more or less surrounded and deceived, like a mist or fleeting cloud before thy eyes, shew thee to thyself as thou art, urge thee to the scrutiny of thy heart and thy conduct, enlighten thee in the research with her light, and thus bring thee forward in self-knowledge, that science so necessary and yet so rare. Now will she call thy attention to the voice of God in nature, then to his voice in revelation, now urge thee to admire the methods of his providence and administration, then to reflect on his previous arrangements for the salvation of mankind, accomplished by Jesus, and here and there and on all sides discover to thee depths of wisdom and intelligence, of condescension and kindness, pure and perennial springs of consolation and joy. Now will she cause thee to feel in all its importance the apprehension of God and his presence, prostrate thee in the dust before the Eternal and Infinite, and bid thee adore him in spirit and in truth, with understanding and sensibility; then will she open thy heart and thy mouth in joyful hymns of praise, give thee to

apprehend the worth of the bounties of thy father in heaven, and teach thee complete acquiescence in his paternal providence and love. Now will she entirely pervade and animate thy frame with the love of God and man, then renovate thy ardour in goodness and make every duty a delight. Now open to thee enchanting prospects in a boundless futurity, raise thee above temporal and visible objects, and bring thee nearer to thy heavenly country and its blessed inhabitants; then inspire thee with fresh courage and vigour for the resolute prosecution of thy course, for unwearied exertions to attain the goal. Thus under the guidance and in the company of religion, thou wilt at one time extend and correct thy conceptions of the most interesting objects, at another confirm thyself in faith and in hope, at another purify and establish thy virtue, now freely enjoy the comfort and the privileges that are even here peculiar to the christian, and now obtain a foretaste of his future transcendent felicity. And how instructive, how profitable, how reviving to the soul will thy hours of retirement be!

Yet more. Wouldst thou blend religion with the whole tenor of thy life, shall it be a lamp to thy feet and a light to thy path, shall it be and afford to thee what it is calculated to be and to afford to mankind; let her fourthly be the partner in all thy joys and pleasures. She would by no means oppose or disturb thy joys and thy pleasures.

asures. She is even the most liberal dispenser of joy, and where she resides and rules sullenness and care and sorrow flee far away, there beneath her steps on every side rise fountains of satisfaction and delight. She denies to her friends only vain, deceitful joys, only those pernicious pleasures which end in pain and beget misery and ruin; and by restraining thee from them she deprives thee of nothing but trouble and remorse and infamy and death. Let thy joys be noble and thy pleasures harmless, and then indulge them under the controul and in the company of religion, if thou wouldst possess them unalloyed. She will refine, elevate, dignify them, and so render thee capable of sublimer joys and felicities hereafter. If therefore thou rejoicest in the manifold bounties of heaven, in the enjoyment of meats and drinks, of health and competence, of the accommodations and elegancies of life, let religion exalt thy joy by making thee consider these benefits entirely as the gifts of God, and enjoy them as proofs and pledges of his parental providence, his favour and affection. Rejoicest thou in thy intellectual capacities and powers, thy understanding, thy reason, thy moral freedom, thy destination to immortality; let religion ennoble thy joy by making thee recognize and feel the honour and the happiness of being created after the image of God, of having communion with the father of spirits, and of approaching per-

perpetually nearer to him, the original fountain of all perfection and happiness. Rejoicest thou in any work that thou hast successfully finished, in the happy issue of thy affairs and undertakings, on account of difficulties and dangers honourably overcome, in the generous fruits of thy public-spirited exertions ; let religion sweeten that joy by causing thee to perceive in all this the complacency, the assistance, the co-operation, the blessing of the Almighty, and to consider thyself as a subordinate instrument by which he executes his plans, and does good to his creatures. Rejoicest thou in society with mankind, thy brethren, dost thou there reciprocally receive and communicate entertainment and pleasure, enjoyest thou there in common with them satisfactions of various kinds ; let religion sanctify and multiply thy joy by leading thee to respect them all as children of thy heavenly father, as creatures whom he himself esteems and loves, and who like thee are destined to an always progressive never-ceasing perfection and happiness. Rejoicest thou in thy proximate and domestic connections, thy friends, thy relations, thy children ; give thy joy by religion the highest degree of vivacity and vigour of which it is capable, raise it into a ravishing hope hereafter again to find thy friend, thy beloved, thy children, in a better world, and there to connect thyself with them in a far nobler manner and for ever. Rejoicest thou in the beauties

beauties of nature; dost thou unite, inspired by the breath of spring, in the general anthem of all living things; let religion enhance thy joy by elevating thy mind to the author and father of nature, and penetrating thy heart with sentiments of reverence, of love, of gratitude, and praise to him. Thus certainly wilt thou, my christian brother, make religion the partner in all thy joys and pleasures, thus certainly wilt thou increase their number, ennoble their quality, prolong their continuance, relish their sweetness more fully, and even by the indulgence of joy become always wiser and better and more perfect.

Wouldst thou blend religion agreeably to its destination with the whole tenour of thy life, shall it be a lamp to thy feet and a light to thy path; let her lastly be also thy friend and comforter in affliction. Yes, when darkness and terror surround thee, thou art in want of a reviving light to cheer the gloom. When walking in rugged and toilsome paths, over hills of difficulty and parched deserts, thou art in want of a safe and trusty guide, to warn thee of devious turnings, to support and refresh thee, and to prevent thee from missing the mark to which thou art speeding thy course. And that cheering light, that trusty guide is religion to her suffering friends. Whoso adheres to her in affluence and prosperity, whoso makes her his constant companion along the journey of life, him assuredly she

she will not forsake in the time of need, in the day of distress ; to him she then appears in the form of a messenger of peace, an angel of consolation sent from God ; she pours balm into his wounds and instils courage and hope into his heart. Yes, my christian brother, be ever true to religion, uniformly submit to her guidance and direction, and then seek relief and solace from her when sorrow and distress come upon thee. Then listen to her gentle, friendly voice, and open every avenue of thy heart to her consolations. Be not surprised at thy sufferings, will she say to thee ; to suffer is the lot of mortals, suffering was the lot of their leader and lord, and was to him what it is to thee, the way to perfection. Murmur not at thy sufferings, for he who inflicts them is just and holy, is essential benignity and love, is thy father, who loves thee even when correcting and proving thee, and who wills and effectuates and permits only what is good and salutary for his children. Add not to the weight of thy sufferings by impatience and complaints ; alleviate them rather by bearing them as divine inflictions with submission and resignation, by wisely profiting by them as means of correction and sanctification, and thereby preparing thyself for a superior life. Faint not beneath thy affliction. Resign thyself to the Almighty, who can strengthen the weak, and understands thy powers and thy necessities, thy
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condition and thy destination, and has adapted to them the several events of thy life; resign thyself to him, he can rescue even from death, and more than compensate thee after death for all thy sufferings. Fix thy view upon futurity; console thyself with the hope of a better world, a blessed immortality; always bear in mind, that to those who love God all things must work together for good; and never forget, how little the short and transient sufferings of the present time are to be compared with the glory that shall hereafter be revealed in us. Persist therefore resolutely, hold fast thy confidence, never let it go; fight the good fight undismayed unto the end, and be then secure of the crown of victory. Yes, thus, my christian friend, comforted and supported by religion, wilt thou conquer all things, she will dispel every cloud that overhangs thy path of life, alleviate every burthen, mitigate every pain, and lead thee through afflictions borne with piety and patience, to perfection and felicity.

And this, my pious hearers, this is the method of combining religion with the whole course of our life, of blending it with our whole system of thought and apprehension, and making it our constant companion and guide, our most familiar friend. Only thus do we not profess and believe it in vain. Thus alone will it be and afford to us what it is designed to be and afford to mankind.

kind. Only thus shall we experience its complete efficacy to our improvement and pacification. And who would not readily regard it in this point of view and gladly avail himself of it? Who would not gladly become so good and so happy by it? Yes, celestial and divine religion, this shalt thou be and procure even to me; to me who am so much in want of thy light, of thy power, of thy consolations; to me who without thee would be the sport of error, of passion, of folly and misery! Yes, be thou my guide, gladly will I follow thee, shew me the way wherein I should go, lead and support me on it, that I may not strike into devious paths, that I may not fail of my object. Teach thou me to be and to do, what as a man, as a christian, as a member of society, I ought to be and to do; and teach me to be and to do it as conscientiously, as confidently and cheerfully as he alone can be and do it who is animated by thy spirit. Do thou accompany me in solitude and in society, everywhere let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is lovely; let me imbibe thy suggestions and follow thy counsel, that everywhere I may think and act wisely and virtuously, and everywhere speak and do good. Do thou share with me, as the friend of my heart, in all my satisfactions and all my sufferings, that I may enjoy the former with more delight and bear the latter with greater firmness. Oh be thou
always

always near me in life and in death, and conduct me through life and death to my superior, my everlasting destination, conduct me to the presence of him who sent thee from heaven to earth to be my teacher and comforter, and through thee has elevated me to the hope of a blessed immortality !

SERMON XXXVIII.

Of Self-knowledge, and the means of acquiring it.

GOD, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, thou examinest and knowest us ; whatever we think and will and do, our most secret inclinations, our gentlest wishes, our most hidden designs are accurately known to thee, and thou triest us by the immutable laws of truth and justice. Yes, thou, our creator and father, knowest and judgest us infinitely better, and more justly, than we ourselves can do. Oh that we might never be unmindful of this truth, and that the awful sentiment that thy piercing eyes survey us and penetrate to the inmost recesses of our hearts, might guard us from the illusions of self-love, from all self-deceit. Though in consequence of our natural limitations we are in many respects an inexplicable mystery to ourselves, yet hast thou elevated us to the rank of rational creatures, endowed us with consciousness and consideration, and thereby made us capable of so far knowing and justly judging of ourselves and our condition, as is necessary to the

the advancement of our perfection and happiness. Did we but constantly employ these privileges and abilities to the ends for which thou hast granted them! Did we, by the careful and faithful use of them become continually more acquainted and conversant with ourselves! How much more wisely, how much more virtuously, how much more contentedly should we think and live! How much more surely and completely be and become, what according to thy gracious will we should and might be and become! Oh enlighten us by thy light and strengthen us by thy power, now that we are about to meditate on these important topics, and bless our reflections to the promotion of a just and salutary knowledge of our real quality and our moral condition. Grant that we may draw off our attention from all that is without us, turn it entirely on ourselves and as sincerely and impartially proceed in the examination of what we are, as the importance of the business requires. We implore it of thee with the confidence of thy children, and further prefer our petitions to thee in the name of thy son, our lord. Our father, &c.

2 COR. xiii, 5.

Know ye not your ownelves?

THE vast utility of self-knowledge is so manifest, that nobody doubts of it, and yet this self-knowledge is extremely far from being common
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among mankind. Who, with any shadow of reason, could pretend to doubt that man can become good and happy only in proportion as he rightly understands himself? How could he properly unfold his capacities and apply and exercise his various powers; how do and afford, what according to his nature he is designed and capacitated to do and to afford; how cheerfully and wisely enjoy the benefits that he himself possesses, how the bounties which surround him on all sides and invite him to enjoyment; how avoid or contend with the evils and dangers that threaten him; how correct his errors and defects, and with unwearied, unremitted ardour urge his onward course to higher perfection and happiness if he is unacquainted with himself, if in all these respects he is feeling about in the dark, and resigns himself entirely to blind instinct or to fickle chance? This self-knowledge is nevertheless extremely far from being common among mankind, and that comparatively but few set themselves in good earnest to acquire it need not be a matter of surprise to any of us. Though the methods for arriving at it be within our power, yet the proper and successful use of them is by no means easy. It is connected with several difficulties, to the surmounting whereof industry and exertion and fortitude are necessary.* It requires much reflection, much consideration, much impartiality, much calm converse with oneself, frequent abstraction from

from the world and its tumultuous, distracting avocations; it requires continued attention, much observation and strict scrutiny within, in order thoroughly to know ourselves. Occupations which to too many persons, if not entirely foreign and unknown, are however more or less difficult and laborious. To mitigate these difficulties, my pious hearers, and to alleviate to you this important and salutary business is the scope of my present discourse. In this view I intend to shew you, wherein self-knowledge consists, or what its requisites are; and then how we may arrive at it, or how we are to proceed and what we must do for coming at the true knowledge of ourselves.

Wherein then, first, does self-knowledge consist? What are its requisites? On what should our observations principally turn? What should we particularly study and examine? The whole business may be comprised under three chief heads. We must study our natural state; we must study our moral state; we must learn to understand the various relations in which we are placed to other beings, if we would have a just sense and apprehension of our own selves and our condition.

First therefore our natural state; what we are, what we have, what we are able to do, and what we may and should be and become. If we would have a proper sense and apprehension of this, my pious hearers, we should often in the stillness of retirement

retirement take these and the like particulars into consideration. What station do I occupy on the scale of things? What place do I hold in the empire of God? To what species and class of creatures do I belong? Am I an entirely brutal and earthly, or a rational creature, endowed with intellectual powers? What affinity have I with the beasts of the field, and how and whereby am I superior to them? What distinguishes me above them? What gives me power and command over them all, even the strongest and fiercest of them? What can I do or omit, which they cannot do or omit? What makes me therefore a man? What privileges are peculiar to me as a man? And what capacities, what faculties have I as such? Of what expansion and discipline are they susceptible? How may and should I use and apply them? What can I perform and bring to effect by them? Are not all the faculties which the creator has granted me, good? May I leave any of them uncultivated or unemployed? But how are they subordinated to one another? Which of them are the noblest, the most permanent? Which ought I to cultivate and strengthen in preference to the rest? Which are designed to lead and guide me to the use of the others? Which appertain most essentially to my individual self? Which shall I retain amidst all the revolutions and vicissitudes of my body and my outward condition? And what analogies do these

my faculties bear to my present state, to its wants, to its occupations and affairs, to my particular circumstances and connections? What analogies to my future superior destination? How may and should I apply them, in order here to be and to do, and there to become, what I am designed here and there to be and to do and to become? — Can I attain to only a certain stated degree of intelligence, of wisdom, of knowledge, of force and strength, of aptitude, of virtue, and must I then stop short, or again proceed, when I have once attained it? Or can I in all these respects perpetually farther advance, proceed to infinity, without ever attaining to the highest degree of my proper perfection? See I not, whenever in thought or action I reach a certain point, another before me, that stands higher, that leads me farther, and allows me to hope for still grander, still more promising prospects? Am I not therefore a creature whose essential faculty is the faculty of thinking, whose greatest prerogative is consciousness and reason, and who is capable of an indefinite, perpetually increasing perfection? — — Am I not, in fine, a being capable of happiness, a creature that can enjoy his existence and his life, his qualities and abilities, can be contented with his situation, cheerfully enjoy the advantages and pleasures of it, and procure himself a perceptible superabundance of agreeable ideas and feelings? Is not the happiness of which I am susceptible manifold

nifold and great? What are the sources of it within me and without? Can I not even now in my present state derive satisfaction and pleasure from them? Does this happiness depend solely or principally on outward things, or depends it more on my inward temper, on my manner of thinking, of apprehending, of viewing and judging of an object? — Such considerations as these, my pious hearers, should often engage us when alone, we should frequently reflect upon them in seclusion and abstraction; these questions we should learn to answer and determine on just grounds, if we would know ourselves according to our natural or physical state, if we would comprehend, what, as men, we are and are able to do and should do and become.

A second general head of self-acquaintance is the knowledge of our moral state or condition. Are we what we are designed to be? Do we that which we are bound to do? What use have we hitherto made of our capacities and powers? What degree of perfection have we reached in the application of them? How stands the proportion between the good and the harm that we have done, the faults we have committed and the progress we have made on the road of virtue? What are our predominant sentiments and affections? What is the state of our character, our usual, ordinary turn and temper? By what principles are we determined and led? What aims do we pursue? What laudable

laudable and what culpable qualities, what excellencies and what defects have we? Which is our good and honourable, which our weak and frail side? How easy or how difficult is it to answer our obligations and to follow the dictates of virtue? How consonant or how discordant are our heart and our life, our thoughts and our actions? What victory over ourselves and the world, what good, generous exertions and actions have we to boast of, and what acts of moral turpitude, what iniquities, what sins and weaknesses have we to accuse ourselves and be ashamed of? Interrogatories which we should often propose to ourselves, which we must be able decidedly to answer, if we would know ourselves regarding our moral state.

— — Yes, my dearest friends, this must be decisive, with every person who determines to know himself and justly to bear the name and the dignity of a man, whether his prevailing sentiments and inclinations are good or bad, consistent with his nature and destination or not, agreeable or disagreeable to God, his creator and sovereign; whether they are directed more to externals than internals, more to the visible or more to the invisible, more to the life and health of the body or more to the life and health of the soul; whether he is more affected by distinctions of rank and station, or by those of the mind and heart, whether abundance of terrestrial goods, or stores of useful knowledge, whether sensual gratifications or intellectual

tellectual pleasures affect him most; whether he prefers those to these or these to those, whether he most pursues the former or most the latter, and seeks his happiness principally in those or in these. He that has never seriously reflected and never arrived to positive certainty on these matters, he that in these particulars is ever wavering from one side to the other, and whenever he is obliged to pass sentence on himself before God and his conscience, is arrested by perplexing doubts and is thrown into confusion, neither understands himself nor the true state of his moral condition; to him therefore real perfection and happiness and the way that leads to them, are indifferent or strange and foreign objects.

Lastly, to self-acquaintance likewise appertains the knowledge of the several relations in which we stand to outward things and their influence on us, the knowledge of our particular situation and circumstances in the world, and the connection in which all this stands with our frame and temper of mind, with our moral condition. Here likewise, my pious hearers, many interrogations and inquiries are to be made, if we would properly understand ourselves and our actual state. — In what relations and habitudes do we stand to God, the supreme, the absolutely perfect being? How are we disposed towards him? How do we behave towards him? What may we hope and expect of him? — What relative situations are we in
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to the persons who are our fellow-inhabitants of this earth in general, and to those in particular, with whom we live in domestic or civil society? What are we to them? What are they to us? What influence have they on our mode of apprehension, on our manners, on our happiness? And what do we produce in all these respects on them? — In what relations do we stand to externals, to the affairs, the goods, the accommodations and pleasures of this life? How do we consider and judge of, how possess and enjoy them? How do riches, power and honour, privileges and dignities, voluptuousness and luxury appear to us? How do we regard these objects? What stress do we lay on them? What impressions does the sight or the enjoyment of them make on us? What power have they over us? What authority and sway do they exercise over us; or, how independent have we rendered ourselves on their demands and on their influence? — What effects has company, what effects have solitude and silence, what effects has example, what effect have praise and blame, what effect have prosperity and adversity on us? — In what situation, in what circumstances, among what persons is it most easy or most difficult to discharge our duty and to do what is right and proper? What sort of work, of company, of dissipations, of amusements is most favourable or unfavourable to us in this respect? What temptations, what allurements to iniquity

iniquity are most dangerous to us? What obstacles and difficulties most prevent us from doing good, and cause us oftenest to stumble? What means of wisdom and virtue, what exercises of devotion and piety are most powerful and efficacious to us?—These questions, my pious hearers, we must not fail to make if we would acquire a thorough knowledge of ourselves.

But how are we to acquire it? How must we set about it, what must we do, what exercises must we adopt, in order thus to come at the knowledge of ourselves? To answer these questions I have destined the second part of my discourse.

To observe ourselves attentively; to avail ourselves of the judgments that others pass on us; to compare our state and our behaviour frequently with the laws of truth and perfection; and to make use of the assistance and suggestions of our friends and acquaintance: are the principal means for arriving at self-knowledge.

The first and most important is attentive and continued observation of ourselves. Of ourself, of our individuality, of our imagination we have a more strict and perspicuous consciousness than of anything that is without us. We can therefore discriminate and compare more objects within us, of what passes in our intellect, than in any other matter. We can far more clearly perceive and far more justly judge of the operations of our faculties, the current of our ideas, their associations,
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their causes and effects, their agreement or their contrariety, than the phænomena of the material visible world. We can consequently understand more of ourselves, and become more intimately acquainted with ourselves, than of all and with all that belongs not to our proper self. But this can no otherwise be brought to pass than by patient attention to ourselves, by the frequent and calm observation of what passes within us.

If then thou wouldst study to be acquainted with thyself, o man, as seldom lose sight of thyself, of thy real identity, of what thinks and acts within thee, as thou possibly canst. Even when engaged in business, in company, in relaxation, cast ever and anon an acute, a scrutinising look within, and constantly support in thee as much as possible the clear consciousness of what thou art and dost. Confound not thyself with what is without thee, or with what occupies thee; not with thy station, not with thy possessions, not with thy outward actions. All this is not *thou*, belongs not to thy *self*, but is only in a longer or shorter, nearer or remoter connection with thee. Often revert to thyself, withdraw thy attention from all that is and happens without thee, fix it entirely on thyself, on thy ideas, thoughts, sensations, opinions, affections, appetites, and for these observations select as much as possible the fittest, the most auspicious conjunctures and opportunities.

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Wouldst thou therefore find out thy prevailing dispositions and propensities, their direction and pitch, give particular heed to thyself, when thy heart lies open to pleasure, when thou feelest thyself free from solicitude and care, when thou art in the company of persons with whom seemingly thou hast no need of disguise or restraint, where thou mayst give full scope to thy sentiments and emotions, where thou needst not suppress them or alter their natural course from any motives of interest or fear. Watch thyself also in domestic life, in the more contracted circle of thy family or thy intimate friends. Remark the impression that outward objects, that what thou seest and hearest and dost make upon thee; remark the first, unprepared and inconsiderate judgment thou passest on them, the first movements of complacency or dislike, the affection or the aversion, the satisfaction or the dissatisfaction they discover in thee, and thence conclude concerning the peculiar and natural bent of thy heart.

Yet more. Wouldst thou study thyself, study to find out the train of ideas, the principles by which thou art chiefly led, thy ordinary turn of mind and manners: observe thyself often in the silence of retirement, where thou art left to thyself without any determinate occupations and designs. Observe what ideas, what sentiments most familiarly present themselves, occupy thee most frequently and for the greatest length of time, which

which thou most quickly and carefully chasest away and obscurest, or art most eager to seize and most fond of detaining; observe what sensations are most prompt to stir within thee, and most easily and completely get the mastery of thy heart, and thence conclude concerning the degree of wisdom and of virtue to which thou hast or hast not attained.

Lastly, observe thyself often in the same design under a lively sense of the presence of God. Think on his omniscience; think on him as the inspector and judge of thy thoughts and inclinations, of thy words and works; think, that no specious appearance deceives him, and that on the verdict which he passes on thee thy everlasting all depends; think on the account thou art one day to give him. This will whet thy perspicacity, abate thy self-love, rectify thy judgment, and teach thee strict impartiality. Thou wilt never dare to call little great and evil good in the presence of God, the All-seeing and Infallible, or to extenuate thy faults and transgressions by idle excuses.

Another means for arriving at self-acquaintance is an impartial application of the judgment which others, friends or enemies, form of us, of our dispositions, of our temper, of our actions. Though these judgments should never be taken by us on principles and rules; though we should never do anything that is wrong, nor omit anything good
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on their account ; though they may be often partial, often harsh and precipitate, yet they may render us attentive to several capacities and abilities that we possess, but which lie dormant in us, as well as to several failings and infirmities of which we were not aware. The friend perhaps knows our good, or corrigible side, and the enemy our bad or weak side, better than we do ; the former, from affection, from the desire of knowing us more accomplished and happy, is rendered sharper sighted, and the latter from hatred, from the desire of obscuring our excellencies and merits, than they otherwise would be, and than we ourselves probably are. Their judgments and remarks should not on that account be indifferent to us. They may sometimes induce us to make investigations and discoveries which otherwise we perhaps should never have instituted. But general prevalent judgments passed on us both by friends and foes, merit our particular attention, because that coincidence always presupposes an agreement more or less with truth, or at least must have the appearance of it in its behalf. If we find, on such investigations, that we appear to be in the sight of others more than we actually are, or that in their opinion we might be and afford more than in fact we are and afford : what an exertion is this to the exertion of our faculties, in order not to deceive the expectations that others perhaps justly entertain of us ! On the other hand, if

if we find that others think and judge worse of us than we deserve, that they impute to us defects and failings which we have not: what an excitement to be more carefully on our guard against whatever may have furnished them with occasion and pretext for their misconceptions, and accordingly not only to avoid what is wicked and wrong, but to abstain from all appearance of it!

A third means conducive to self-knowledge, is, by frequently and impartially comparing ourselves and our state with the laws of truth and perfection. If we would rightly know and judge of ourselves, we must not only understand what we are, but likewise what we might and should be; not only what we do, but also what we are bound and called to do. Without this knowledge we may be apt to deem ourselves better and more perfect than we really are. Thus the poor man may think himself rich, till he compares his circumstances with those of the really opulent; and the ignorant man may fancy himself learned, till he compares his perceptions and knowledge with the perceptions and knowledge of the truly learned. Let us therefore frequently and attentively compare our dispositions, our inclinations, our conduct, with the laws of God, with the precepts of christianity, with the example of Jesus, and see how far they agree and how far they differ. Let us contrast what we are and do and afford, with what other persons, whom we know and honour as patterns of

of wisdom and integrity are and do and afford, or what they have been, done and afforded, and thence conclude how far we as men, as members of society, as christians, as creatures who are in all essentials like them, have answered the true end of our being or not.

To conclude; avail yourselves, my pious hearers, in the same design, of the aid of your acquaintance and friends, those who are most about you, see you the oftenest, know you most intimately and have the most familiar intercourse with you. Give them not only the liberty, but the express commission, to watch over you, and to observe you in such moments when you think yourself unobserved, or when you are acting habitually or passionately, and are not entirely master of your temper. Conjure them to remind you of your failings and infirmities, not to palliate them or conceal them from you, not to forbear mentioning the shocking or pernicious impression they made on them, and to call home your attention and rouse you to reflect on yourself and your state of mind, whenever they perceive in you anything immoral, or inconsistent with your character, your station, your principles and opinions. Fail not to hearken to their admonitions, examine yourself by them when alone, trace your errors up to their source, consider the conjunctures in which you were overseen, the occasions and provocations you had at the time, either within or from without, and thence

thence draw conclusions on the degree of your strength, or your weakness, on what is propitious or unpropitious to your morals and your virtue.

Weigh all this well together in your minds, my pious hearers. Let me recommend to you frequent and calm observation on yourselves; let me recommend to you to avail yourselves of the impartial judgment that others may form of you; carefully to compare your temper and manners with the laws of truth and of perfection; let me, in short, recommend to you the grateful use of the remarks and suggestions of your confidential friends: so will you be ever advancing in the knowledge and reasonable estimation of yourselves, and thereby become constantly more wise and more happy.

SERMON XXXIX.

The impediments to Self-knowledge.

GOD, who, in thy parental affection, wouldst train us up to intelligent and virtuous beings, render us happy by intelligence and virtue, and educate and prepare us for a superior life, what ample means does thy loving-kindness grant us to that end! Endowed by thee with consciousness and reason, we are enabled to study ourselves, our nature and destination, our necessities, our capacities and powers, and to appretiate and judge of all that we are and do and what surrounds us, by the relations in which it stands to our real, permanent perfection. And what lengths might we proceed in this important and salutary knowledge, if we were more attentive to ourselves, if we had more at heart our improvement and perfection, if we hearkened more to the dictates of our understanding and our conscience, and were more vigilant against self-deception! But alas too often we purposely turn away our eyes from what we are and do and what we should be and do ;

do ; wilfully mistake the true situation of our internal affairs, and lose sight of ourselves in the multitude of sensible, terrestrial objects, which engage and distract our minds. Too often we are governed by sensuality, dazzled by false lustre, deceived by the artifices of self-love, and account ourselves far better than we really are ; and from indifference towards what is eminently beautiful and good, what is perfect in its kind, content ourselves with the lowest stages of virtue. And thus we never become either so good or so happy as, according to our constitution and the resources thou givest us, we might and should become. O God, we are covered with confusion before thee in confessing our negligence and supineness, our great distance from the glorious prize which thou hast set before us. Oh might we henceforth with greater diligence and care take the road that leads to it, and let no impediments, no difficulties deter us from the prosecution of it ! Assist us, merciful father, to surmount those obstacles and to conquer those difficulties. Teach us in that view to understand them, and inspire us by thy spirit with strength and courage to defeat whatever may hinder us from being thoroughly acquainted with ourselves. To this end accompany with thy blessing the considerations we have now to offer, and hearken to our prayer through Jesus Christ, in whose name we further call upon thee, saying : Our father, &c.

2 COR. xiii. 5.

Know ye not your ownelves ?

UNLESS we can foresee the obstructions that we may meet with on our way, or the difficulties that are implicated in any business ; we shall be very apt to stumble and fall over the former, and to be disheartened by the latter. Whereas, the better we are informed of both the one and the other ; the juster notions we previously have of them ; the less we come unexpectedly upon them : so much the better can we prepare our minds for them, and the easier and surer shall we surmount the former and subdue the latter. The case is the same with self-knowledge and the use of the means by which it is to be attained. To understand and to judge justly of oneself, is no such easy matter as some perhaps may think ; it is not an affair that requires neither particular attention, nor laborious exertion, nor persevering resolution. Whoever sets about this business without making up his mind to the encountering of impediments and difficulties in it, and flatters himself that he shall finish it in a short time and without much pains, will be deceived in his expectations, and runs great hazard of entirely giving up the enterprise as suddenly, or as abruptly leaving it in the middle, as he inconsiderately engaged in it. He may fancy that he is walking a pleasant and
easy

easy path, but he will frequently find the track obscure, often losing itself in labyrinths, often rough and toilsome ; and he alone will not by all this be deterred from pursuing his way, who has previously laid his account in it, and is firmly resolved to press forward to the mark, however troublesome and laborious it may prove.

For that reason, my pious hearers, and in that view, it is my intention at present to discourse to you on the principal impediments in this science, and to make you acquainted with them. Self-knowledge, as I lately shewed you, is an extensive and complicate business. We must study to find out our natural temper, our moral state, our relative positions to outward objects and their influence on our character and behaviour. And the use and application of the means by which we are to acquire that knowledge, is not unattended with difficulty. The observation of ourselves, the use of the remarks and judgments of others, the impartial comparison of our moral condition with the laws of truth and of perfection, and the due application of the suggestions and admonitions of our confidential friends : all this implies great attention, much seriousness, much honesty and fidelity, and cannot be brought to effect without continued exertions. Now, to prevent these exertions from becoming tiresome and dispiriting, we should be apprised of the obstacles that are connected with them, and learn how to avoid or sub-

due them. And to this I hope to contribute something by my present discourse. We will therefore reflect on the principal impediments to self-knowledge. — We will examine what it is that deters so many persons from acquiring this knowledge, and encumbers it to so many others, and impedes them on their progress.

The prodigious force of sensuality ; a dissipated restless life ; the disagreeable that mixes with the business of self-examination and self-observation ; supineness and indifferency towards moral perfection ; the wrong notions that we form of mankind, of their nature and destination ; the false rules by which we form estimates of ourselves ; and lastly the flatteries of other persons : these are the principal impediments to self-understanding. Let us acquire more particular information of their nature and strength, that we may afterwards proceed to arm ourselves against them.

The first then is the prodigious force which sensuality has and exerts over such numbers of mankind. Our real self, our peculiar individual which we should study to understand, falls not under the senses. It is an invisible, intellectual energy, which is however conscious of itself, acts with consciousness, and can deliberately look back and reflect upon itself and its own actions. The senses inform us only concerning externals, and call our attention to them alone. If we allow ourselves to be governed chiefly by the senses, if we give more heed

heed to what we see and hear than to what our own self is and thinks and effectuates, we shall not be properly qualified for discriminating between self and what does not belong to it. We are therefore perpetually confounding self with things that are not ourselves ; assuming powers, distinctions, possessions, merits which do not originate in us, but are merely adscititious ; and accounting ourselves much greater, worthier, mightier, better, than we really are, because we ascribe to our own personal greatness and consequence and power and goodness, whatever our situation has that outwardly symbolizes with them, or what the vulgar, who judge solely from the senses, call by those names. From the same cause it is that we so often take semblance for reality, the form for the substance, and imagine that we are and have and are able to do, whatever we seem to be and to have and to be able to do. We may therefore easily know our body and our figure, but not the mind and its faculties and dispositions, our outward but not our inward state, our connection with the visible, but not our connection with the invisible world. No, my pious hearers, if ye would learn to understand and to judge justly of yourselves, beware of the tyrannical authority of sense. Be not, like children, imposed upon by every glittering appearance. Strip as much as possible every object, and especially yourself, of all extrinsic ornament, of all borrowed lustre, all

artificial dress. Dive always to the bottom, to the substance of things; contemplate, scrutinize yourself, divested of all that is foreign to you, just as you are, cultivate your understanding with due care, and let reason prevail over the impressions of sense.

A dissipated, restless, tumultuous life is a second and certainly a principal impediment to the acquisition of true self-knowledge, or to the attainment of any remarkable proficiency in it. Delighting to roam abroad, and familiar every where, we are strangers at home, strangers to our own character, strangers to our own heart, strangers to all that is most important for a rational creature to know. We give our thoughts to wander through the whole world; on the wings of imagination we fly from pole to pole; but we never descend into ourself, we lose sight of all that belongs to our proper personality. He that is fond of dissipation may exist whole days, whole weeks, whole months, without being once in his right mind, without once coming properly to himself, without once having a truly intimate, clear consciousness of himself and his natural and moral condition. One while it is business and work, then social pleasures and amusements, now puerile sports and pastimes, that draw his attention entirely from within, and fix it entirely on outward things, on transient, empty forms and appearances. Giddy by the fascinating charm of these objects,

objects, and hurried away with the torrent, he shuns retirement and abstraction, flies from his proper home, avoids all serious reflection, seeks his repose in stupefaction, and lives and floats entirely in what is not himself; and if he ever happen to be roused from his dream, or disturbed in his slumber, he feels himself dissatisfied and miserable, and eagerly seizes on any means that offer to lull him again to sleep, to deaden thought, to stifle consciousness and to get away from himself. How unknown, how much a stranger to himself, must such a man be! How can he thus acquire a just apprehension of his character and his condition? — No; if you, my dear friends, would arrive at that knowledge, beware of too frequent and too long continued diversions, as mortal poison to wisdom and virtue. Never seek your recreation and your pleasure in stupefaction. Never be you so attached to dissipation as to lose sight of yourselves for it. Rather at times collect your rambling thoughts, and cast amidst the tumult one serious look upon yourself. Lead, as far as your calling and duty allow, a quiet and sequestered life. Such a life is the best school of wisdom and virtue. Do whatever ye do, enjoy whatever ye enjoy, with the clear consciousness of yourself, and thus render all your actions rational actions, and all your enjoyments intellectual enjoyments. Exist and live more within than without you, more in your own thoughts and sensations

tions, than in the judgment and the opinions of mankind, more in what you are, than in what you have and possess.

The unpleasantness that mixes with the business of self-examination and self-knowledge, and the still greater unpleasantness that is sometimes apprehended from it, is a third circumstance that deters too many persons from it, or renders them negligent and heartless in it. The indolent, sensual man shuns all exertion of his mental faculties, all serious, continued reflection on what passes within him, or relates to his character and to his moral conduct ; and yet without that it is absolutely impossible thoroughly to understand himself. He had rather remain ignorant or mistaken in these important concerns, than lay himself under such restraint, and so laboriously purchase the benefit he might hope to reap from it. — A man likewise is sometimes still more afraid of the disagreeable and mortifying discoveries he will probably make in this occupation, and which must necessarily alarm and disturb him. He foresees, or forebodes, that the state of his mind and his heart is not such as to procure him satisfaction and comfort from the more accurate knowledge of it. He is afraid lest himself should be forced to censure and condemn his dispositions, his inclinations, his conduct, as bad and sinful. He would not give occasion and scope to the reproaches, the accusations which often secretly stir within him, to rise up against him

him in louder clamours and entirely destroy his already tottering security and repose. As an unfortunate trader, whose business and concerns are fallen into perplexity and dilapidation, avoids all examination that might disclose to him the real state of his affairs, and thus, in order to save himself at present a few disagreeable and painful sensations and ideas, exposes himself to the hazard of being sooner or later plunged into distress and lacerated by remorse. Deplorable infatuation ! No, my pious hearers, shun not transient troubles, if you would avoid bringing on yourselves hereafter far heavier, really oppressive burdens. Shun neither pains nor exertion, if ye would have a due sense and apprehension of your own selves, if ye desire to become wise and happy. Decline not to view yourselves, in your real, natural form, divested of all pageantry and pomp, however sad and humiliating the sight may prove to you. The day will come when you must and will thus see yourselves ; therefore the sooner that happens, the easier it will be for you to remove by repentance and amendment what deforms and disgraces you, and to restore truth and order and tranquillity and peace within.

Indifference towards what is called moral, christian perfection, what constitutes superior wisdom and virtue, is a fourth impediment to the attainment of self-knowledge. We have a natural aversion from undertaking and executing any laborious

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much less any ungrateful task, unless we are first firmly persuaded of its importance, or of the very valuable benefit that will probably accrue from it. It is only that persuasion that can counterbalance the temptations to indolence and artful evasion. Here, in the business of self-knowledge, the object is to promote our intrinsic, spiritual, moral perfection, to make progress on the way of wisdom and virtue ; consequently a benefit which though extremely great and essential, yet has no extraordinary charms for the sensual and thoughtless. What is human, christian perfection, what are wisdom and virtue in the eyes of the great multitude? A beautiful picture, that in reality nowhere exists ; a flattering dream, that vanishes when we awake ; a sublime ideal form, which we should pursue in vain, and which nobody is able to come up to. To what purpose then, it is said, to what purpose all this laborious attention to oneself, to whatever we think and desire, to every alteration that happens in our mind and in our heart? Wherefore that strict vigilance over every wish, every inclination, every cupidity, that happens to arise, every resolution that we adopt, every step that we take? We ought doubtless to avoid folly and vice, but not make any haughty pretensions to extraordinary degrees of wisdom and virtue. And to accomplish this needs no such mighty stir about examinations and observations. Folly and vice strike us at first sight, and none can be deceived

ceived in their appearance.—To such as think so,—and so think but too many persons,—to them indeed self-knowledge, in its proper and noblest signification, can be a matter of no great consequence, they will therefore find little inducement to acquire it. But is this to think justly, is it to think rationally? What is it that deserves our utmost attention, our strictest care, our most vehement efforts, if it be not intrinsic, spiritual perfection? What besides that, of all that we are and have, remains to us in death and in the future world? And what are the bounds that are set us in this respect? When are we as wise and as virtuous as we can be and become? Are we not creatures capable of an always increasing, of an infinite improvement and perfectibility? And how can we ever be safe from the most shocking excesses of folly and vice, unless we know and stop up all, even their most remote and latent sources within us? How cease from being wicked, without really becoming good? And how really become good, without bringing into subjection all our thoughts and affections and aims and endeavours, to the laws of truth and order? No; recognize and feel the high value of wisdom and virtue, o man; recognize and feel that thereon entirely rests thy perfection and happiness both in this world and in that which is to come; set not any arbitrary bounds to thy exertions and prospects in this respect; endeavour to become as wise, as good, as perfect

perfect as ever thou canst : so will nothing be indifferent to thee, nothing unimportant that conducts thee to self-knowledge, and renders thee in any respect better acquainted with thyself.

The wrong notions we are apt to form of mankind in general, of their nature and destination, are a fifth and too common an impediment to a thorough self-acquaintance. Would we acquire an adequate sense and apprehension of ourselves : we should form just conceptions of human nature, of its capacities and powers, of its strength and weakness, of its present and future destination. We should learn what man is and has as man, what he is able to perform, what he is designed to be and to become, and set him neither narrower nor more ample bounds than his creator has set him. How erroneous, however, how false are the conceptions we frequently form of mankind, and which we afterwards apply to ourselves ! Now, and that usually, we deem them far worse, more weak, more impotent than they really are, make a poor insignificant being of man, think nothing, or very little, is to be expected and required of him, mistake all sentiment of energy and force, for pride ; all exertion after great and noble exploits, after higher perfection, for self-deception and vanity ; imagine that man can contribute little or nothing towards his own improvement, and either lower him to a level with the beasts of the field, or make of him a simply
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passive creature, rather a mechanical than a free agent. And after forming such an idea of man, no wonder indeed if we find ourselves in a great degree feeble and frail and corrupt, if we discover scarcely anything good in ourselves, but all one mass of evil; then we are easily persuaded to regard all our crimes and iniquities, how gross soever, as unavoidable weaknesses, and the dereliction of them as impossible. — Now, on the other hand, we exalt man into an angel, make of him a faultless, blameless creature, imputing everything to him as a sin, allowing his good endeavours and actions no value at all, requiring of him what he is unable to perform; and then, when we come to apply this visionary form to ourselves, how naturally must it render us dejected and remiss! and how erroneous must the conclusions be that we thence draw concerning our own situation and our moral condition! Beware of these mistakes and prevarications, o thou who wouldst truly understand and judge thyself. Take man for what he really is, and learn to appretiate him according to truth. Recognize with sentiment and conviction on one hand his dignity, his faculties, his high appointment, his essential prerogatives over all the other inhabitants of the globe, and consider that he is designed for nobler ends and capable of greater things. But likewise on the other hand be deeply sensible to his limitations, and think them no disgrace, nor make thyself any unnecessary

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reproaches nor be afflicted about them, and require not to be and to afford more than as a man in thy present state thou canst and shouldst be and afford.

A no less considerable and common impediment to self-knowledge are sixthly the erroneous fallacious measures by which we estimate and judge ourselves. Instead of comparing our temper and our life with the temper and the life of Jesus, that grand model and exemplar of all human perfection ; instead of contrasting our sentiments and actions with the sentiments and actions of the best and worthiest of mankind : we compare ourselves with such as are still more ignorant, more foolish and corrupt than ourselves ; and, on finding that we are far superior to them, we rest contented in the trifling preëminence we have over thoroughly despicable, wicked and profligate persons. Instead of comparing and judging of our character and conduct by the laws of God, by the precepts of christianity, we compare them with the fashion that prevails in certain societies, or at particular times, with what is called elegant behaviour or good breeding, with the degree of rectitude and virtue, that is accepted and passes current in the world, and are satisfied with being and doing what the generality of mankind are and do, though it be ever so little. Instead of examining and estimating ourselves by what constitutes the greatest possible perfection of mankind, we examine and estimate ourselves by what raises

raises them scarcely above the villain, above the murderer, the robber, the adulterer, the betrayer of innocence, and reckon ourselves good, because we might still be much worse. Be you, my pious hearers, upon your guard against these impostures of self-deceit, against these artifices of a corrupt and prevaricating heart, if ye would understand and pass a right judgment on yourselves. Submit to the conduct and guidance of truth, the austere truth, on these occasions. Seek not so much by any means to quiet your minds concerning your state, as rather to view it and to study it as it actually is. Use in this respect no other measures than such as will abide the test of truth, and answer the standard before the judgment-seat of God and of an awakened, an impartial conscience. Judge, as Jesus says, not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment; judge in such manner as that ye will have no need hereafter to dread the decretory sentence of a higher tribunal.

To all these impediments in the way of self-knowledge must be added lastly the flatteries and encomiums of mankind, which so oft pervert our judgment, by representing in false colours our character and our conduct, our excellences and our defects. Sometimes it is from a mistaken complaisance, sometimes from base self-interest, that others excuse and extenuate our failings, greatness our abilities and attainments, and elevate the little good that we have and do to the dignity
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of extraordinary virtues and merits. Sometimes they pay respect to our rank, to our opulence, to our office, to our consequence in society, under the appearance of doing honour to ourselves, and thus mislead us to ground our intrinsic worth on such outward appendages, and to judge ourselves rather by what we seem and signify, than by what we really are. If ye would learn to understand yourselves, my pious hearers, let not the voice of the sycophant deceive you; and hold everyone for a sycophant who finds no defects and failings in you, or artfully excuses and justifies such as you have, everyone who approves, praises, sometimes praises to your face, all that you say and do, or draws comparisons between you and others, always tending to the discredit of the latter. Others may perhaps be too lenient, too indulgent in the verdicts they pass on you and your actions; be you therefore the more severe and impartial in the verdict you pass upon yourselves, and build not your self-satisfaction so much on the approbation that others bestow on you, as on your own examination and the sentence of truth.

And now, my dearest friends, let the consideration of all these impediments to self-knowledge put you upon your guard; let them render you attentive to yourselves and to all that any way relates to your moral condition; let them make you prudent and cautious in your judgments and your conduct; let them encourage you to prosecute an affair

affair that is in many respects so difficult, and in every respect so important, with the greater diligence and care, and never to be weary or relaxed in the execution of it, even though it should not always succeed. Without self-acquaintance no improvement, and without improvement no real happiness is to be obtained. Without self-acquaintance we can never become what we are designed to become, never afford what we are capable of affording, never in all particulars act consistently with the ends for which we were created, never assert our rank among the creatures of God and our place in his empire, never fully reach our glorious destination in the present and in the future world. What arguments for acquiring this important knowledge, for surmounting all impediments that might deter us from it, and for vanquishing the difficulties that are connected with it! Oh may these arguments have their proper effect upon us all! Amen.

SERMON XL.

Self-examination concerning our Dispositions and Actions.

GOD, creator and father of mankind, thou hast formed us rational, moral creatures, capable of great perfection and happiness. Oh that we might always more diligently strive to be and to become what thy loving-kindness has designed us to be and to become! That we might likewise in this respect be ever learning more justly to understand and to judge of ourselves! And may our present religious exercise be particularly blessed to that end! Behold us here assembled before thee, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, for the purpose of reflecting on our highest interests, of searching out our hearts and our ways in thy presence, and of investigating the grounds of our hope and of our trust in thee! Oh that we may do it with ~~that~~ sincerity, with that seriousness, with that love of truth and that desire of improvement, which so important an occupation demands, and which alone can render it salutary to us! Oh
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that, while employed in it, we may never forget that thou lookest down upon us, that thy eyes pervade the inmost recesses of our souls, that thou judgest us by the immutable measures of truth, and that on thy sentence the final decision of our fates depends! Do thou direct, most gracious father, our entire attention to ourselves, to our dispositions and our conduct. Let us view them and judge them as they really are. By the light of thy eternal truth dispel our prejudices, our errors, the illusions of self-love. Speak silence and serenity to our hearts, and let no inordinate passion obscure or pervert the judgment of our mind. Accompany in this design our reflections on the doctrines of religion with the influences of thy abundant mercy, and hearken to our prayer through Jesus Christ, our lord, in whose name and words we further call upon thee, Our father, &c.

2 COR. xiii. 5.

Prove your own selves.

SELF-EXAMINATION, my pious hearers, presupposes in man the energies and prerogatives that are adapted to render that business no less agreeable and interesting to him than it is salutary and needful. To prove, try, examine oneself, implies to reflect on oneself, on our dispositions and actions, on our habitudes and relations, on our present state and on our prospects and expectations,

tations, comparing the former with certain laws and rules and the latter with the arguments whereon they rest, and thence to conclude concerning what we are and have, or what we are deficient in, and concerning what we may or may not hope to become and to obtain. And does not man by this occupation shew himself in his full dignity and grandeur? Does he not thus perform, what no other creature on the earth besides can do? Does he not then feel and employ his noblest prerogatives? Then he thinks and acts as a creature clearly conscious of himself and his situation, endowed with reason and liberty, capable of a great moral perfection, that can perceive the remoter consequences of things, distinguish semblance from reality, and in thought connect and bring into one point of view the past, the present and the future. And must not to feel this, to do this, be no less agreeable than interesting to man? Does he not then feel himself greater and stronger, than when relieving his animal wants, or gratifying his sensual appetites? Certainly the wiser and better mankind are; the more justly they know how to value the especial privileges they have received as men: the more grand and important is the business of self-examination to them; and the more time and pains will they bestow upon it. May these considerations likewise move you to it, my pious hearers, now, that the festivals and communions are again approaching;
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seasons that summon you on all accounts to greater quiet and abstraction and to serious meditation. My design at present is to give you some directions on that head.

Self-examination, as I have already told you, may be divided into general and particular. The former relates to our moral state in the aggregate, is attached to no particular seasons, can never be too frequently entered upon, is needful and salutary at one time as well as at another, and should more or less be the daily occupation of the christian who aspires to a superior perfection. The latter, particular self-examination, is more confined to the preparation for the rite of the sacred supper, and has a peculiar reference to the motives that lead us to that religious solemnity, and the frame of mind wherein we partake in it. For the present, my pious hearers, we will dwell upon the former, general self-examination; and the latter, particular self-examination, we will make the subject of our reflections, on some future occasion.

Self-examination in its largest range and in its general signification, embraces all that belongs to our perfection and happiness, all that we are and do and have and enjoy, our knowledge, our faith, our virtue, our hope, our several relations and habitudes, the influence outward objects have upon us and our reciprocal influence on them, our views and pursuits, our businesses and pleasures,

tures, our dispositions and actions. The greater the compass and the diversity of the objects concerning which we are to prove ourselves, the more necessary it is that at each time we should confine ourselves to a specific kind and class of them, that we may neither distract nor fatigue our attention. At present, my pious hearers, we will turn it to our dispositions and to our actions or our conduct in general. These shall be the two primary objects of our self-examination at this time.

To begin therefore with our dispositions. How are they framed? What are the governing affections or inclinations of my mind? That is, which are most easily and frequently raised in me, which actuate me more usually and naturally than any others, accompany and govern me more than others, which have the prevalence over all others and consequently the greatest influence on all my opinions, determinations, pursuits, actions, on my satisfaction and my pleasure? On these prevalent or predominant inclinations of our mind and their moral quality, in fact the whole of what we call the natural or distinguishing temper depends, my pious hearers, and consequently they form the basis of our perfection and our happiness both in the present and in the future world. Whither then are my predominant inclinations, whither are my prevalent appetites and affections directed? To good or to ill? To what is well-pleasing to God, or to what is agreeable and flattering to my sensual
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lusts and propensities? To external transitory goods, or to internal, permanent interests? To riches and honour, to splendored opulence, to a luxurious, ostentatious life, or to wisdom and virtue, and the perfection of my rational, immortal spirit? Which of these objects have in my eyes the greatest worth? Which do I esteem and love the most? After which does my heart pant and stretch with the greatest eagerness of desire? The loss of which do I dread the most? For the possession of which do I long and contend with the greatest ardour? Which most elevates and recreates my mind, the thought of God, my creator, my father, the author of my being, of my welfare, and the source of my everlasting happiness, or the thought of the temporal prosperity and preferments that I possess, of the sensual pleasures that I enjoy? Which delights me more, the inward consciousness that I think and act with honest intentions, or the approbation with which my speculations and actions are honoured by others: the victory I obtain over myself and my passions, or the victory I gain over my opponents, my adversaries: the progress I make on the road of worldly prosperity, or the progress I make on the path of wisdom and virtue: the good that I am able to do to others and the relief I can afford them, or the services and the benefits that I receive from them? Which hurts and disturbs me more, that I have forfeited the complacency of God, or the favour

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of mankind; that I suffer loss and detriment in my internal perfection or in my outward welfare; that I sin and fail in my duty, or that I am confined and retarded in my efforts after terrestrial objects; that I bring troubles and hardships on others by my default, or that I am obliged to bear and suffer for the sake of others? Wherein do all my wishes centre? Whither tend all my desires? Wherein do I place and seek my principal, my highest happiness? Is it in the creator or in the creature? In reality or in ostentation? In internals or in externals? In the present or in the future? Where seek, where find I the real life, the nourishment and recreation of my spirit, the solace of my heart, my pleasure in prosperity, my comfort in adversity, my satisfaction in life and in death?

Or, that we may still further illustrate this self-examination concerning our tempers and dispositions, by attaching it to more determinate ideas, we will give it another turn, my pious hearers. Let each of us ask himself: how do I stand affected towards God, how towards mankind, how towards virtue, how towards vice, how in prosperity, how in adversity, how towards the present, how towards the future? Therefore, how am I affected towards God? Is the thought and apprehension of God truly interesting to my mind, and dear to my heart above all things? Do I never find it incommodious or troublesome to me? Do I never try to obviate or to efface it?

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Is it welcome and desirable to me in every place, at every time, at every instant of my life? Does it accompany and actuate me in the world and while I am about my business as well as during divine service? And does that apprehension, that grand, that blessed sentiment fill and pervade me with awe, with submission, with love, with joy, with confidence and trust? Do my thoughts and feelings correspond with the relations in which I stand as a creature to my creator, as a subject to my sovereign, as a son to my heavenly father? Am I constantly ready to do that which he commands me to do, to suffer what he inflicts upon me, to acquiesce entirely in his will, and to be guided and governed by him without resistance or reserve? — How am I, secondly, affected towards mankind? Do I esteem, honour, love them as my brothers and sisters, as children of our common father in heaven, as creatures who like myself are capable of great things and are fitted for great designs? Do I remark and acknowledge the excellencies that each of them has, and the good that each of them does and enjoys, with gladness of heart and intimate satisfaction? Do I take a cordial interest in all that relates and happens to them, so as to rejoice with the joyful and to weep with the mourner? Amongst all of them is there not one whom I despise, envy, hate, whose prosperity I grudge, to whom I wish evil, or whom I could purposely injure and offend? Not one of all

all to whom I do not wish well and would not do good, whom I should not be ready to assist, to serve and to relieve, if I had the ability and means and opportunity? Am I as equitably, reasonably, kindly, compassionately, beneficently, gently affected towards all of them, as our father in heaven is towards all of us? — And what are my sentiments respecting virtue? How is my heart disposed towards it? Is it indifferent or sensible to whatever is morally beautiful and good and excellent? Does it remain cold and insensible at the idea, at the practice of it, or is it warmed by it and penetrated with life and zeal? Do I hold virtue for that which it is, for the greatest prerogative of man, for his true nobility and his real perfection, for the only sure way to happiness; and think and judge I so of all the virtues without exception, whether they be agreeable to my constitution, to my ordinary habits, to my lusts and passions or not? Does virtue wherever and with whomsoever I find her, and in whatever form I perceive her, attract my veneration, my love, my submission to her, and do I myself seek my highest honour, my whole glory in the faithful observance of her precepts? Is the idea of her an irksome constraint to me, or does it raise in me a sentiment of the noblest liberty; is she to me a harsh despotic mistress, or a gentle and familiar friend; a disturber or a dispenser of joy? — How do I on the other hand stand affected towards vice? Is it in
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my eyes and in my opinion, as disgraceful, as degrading, as pernicious, as in very deed and in truth it is? Or does it retain some fallacious charms for me, which cause me still at times to look back upon the way of it with complacency and desire, or even tempt me to enter upon it? Do I think, judge, speak of whatever is manifestly bad and vicious, with the disapprobation and the abhorrence which it deserves, or do I allow myself to jest upon it, to laugh at it, and to entertain and divert myself and others with it as with some indifferent topic? Is vice equally contemptible to me in every form, in every garb, in every station, under every disguise whether coarse or refined? Or does it dazzle me when surrounded by pomp and pageantry, or is attended by authority and wealth? Do I actually reckon sin the greatest of all evils, the only real evil? Am I more offended at it than at any outward defect, than at any other imperfection, and is its service and its dominion insupportable to me?—To proceed. How am I affected in prosperity, and with regard to success, or to outward welfare? What to me are riches, honour, respect, authority, power, health, strength, beauty? Are they to me all, are they what I chiefly desire, covet, seek? Are they to me ends or subordinate means? Is it the possession of them or their good and proper use that renders them agreeable and valuable to me? Is it these properties and distinctions, or is it intelligence,

gence, wisdom, virtue, approximation to perfection, assurance of the divine complacency, the prospect into a better, superior life that exhilarate me most, and for which I most assiduously strive? Can I sacrifice those to these, relinquish those for the sake of these, if my duty and conscience so require? Or is my heart so wholly attached to the former, that I seem to lose a portion of myself, my principal happiness if they are in part or entirely ravished from me? — How, on the other hand, am I affected in adversity, how disposed in reference to the afflictions and troubles of this life? Does my spirit and my heart revolt against them; or do I submit to them as the decrees and dispensations of sovereign wisdom and goodness? Do I account them absolutely evil and noxious, or means and methods calculated to promote my interest? Do I complain of them as unjust; or do I confess and revere in them the blameless will of my father in heaven? Do I bear them with murmurings and repinings, or with resignation and patience? Do they keep me aloof from God, or bring me nearer to him? Do they attenuate my piety and virtue, or nourish and strengthen them? — How am I finally disposed towards the present and towards the future? Which of the two is of most consequence in my sight? Which the ultimate end of my exertions? Which of the two gives my affections and appetites the strongest impulse? Which has the most powerful influence

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on my determinations and views? The visible that remains but for a short period, or the world unseen that continues for ever? Is the present to me what it should be to the wise man, to the christian, a state of education, of exercise, of preparation; and do I contentedly and readily do and avail myself of whatever this state demands of me? Is the future always interesting, always present to my mind; do I consider, judge, treat all things in a view to it, and do I never entirely lose sight of my superior destination, my true and proper home?

Thus, my pious hearers, should we call ourselves to account concerning our sentiments and affections, and afterwards decide whether they are good or bad, generous or vile, pleasing to God or displeasing to him. In like manner ought we to reflect on our actions and on our moral conduct in general, and compare it with our proper destination, our several relations, our duties and the will of God. And how much here likewise is to be asked and examined! Let us, each for himself, proceed in communing with his own heart.

How then are my actions, how is my conduct in general ordered? Are the former, is the latter regulated by the laws of God? Do they harmonize with my nature, with my destination, with my duties, with my temporal and celestial vocation? In all that I undertake and do, do I consult my conscience and the will of God? Do I inquire not

so much what others do or do not, what they approve or disapprove, what pleases or displeases them, or what will perhaps procure me some present profit or pleasure, as rather what is true and right and becoming, what may attract the approbation of God and promote my intrinsic, lasting perfection? Am I no longer in bondage to sin? Am I no longer governed by irregular passions, and against my inclination hurried on to iniquity? Do I feel myself actually free, and do I assert my liberty as the most precious ornament of man by never acting contrary to my perceptions and my conviction? Is every duty sacred and inviolable to me, whether it be easy or difficult, whether the fulfilment of it bring upon me praise or censure, profit or loss? Do I that which in my situation, in my calling, according to my relative positions and faculties, I can and ought to do, with conscientious punctuality and with a willing heart? Do I it in reference to God, from obedience and gratitude towards him, and thus alleviate and dignify every transaction and occupation? Is my conduct consistent with itself, uniformly regulated by the same principles and tending to the same ends, wherever I am, in whatever employed, be the result what it will? Or do I follow at one time my conscience, at another my passions; now the dictates of reason, then the impulses of sense; now the nobler maxims of christianity, then the precepts of mere outward propriety? Are probity
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and beneficence become pleasant to me, or do they not always cost me trouble and constraint and self-denial?

However, that we may also under this head be less diffuse, my pious hearers, and be able to adhere to more fixt and determinate leading ideas, we will likewise give this trial another direction. We will each of us ask himself: how do I behave as a man, how as a member of the community, how as head of a family, how as a friend, how as a worshiper of God, how as a christian? So many relations, which we should never lose sight of, as embracing the whole of our conduct in all its particulars and respects.

Therefore: how do I behave as a man? - Do I esteem and honour the human nature in myself and in others? Do I sedulously avoid thinking or doing anything that might degrade, weaken, injure it regarding myself or others? Is all that makes man what he is, are all his capacities and abilities and accomplishments and claims respectable and sacred to me? Am I sensible to the dignity of man? Do I exult in his destination? Do I maintain the one and proceed to the other by an intelligent, discreet behaviour, by great, by generous sentiments and exertions? Is nothing of all that relates to mankind, foreign or indifferent to me? Do I take an interest in all the fortunes of the human race as in the events of one great family to which I belong, and does whatever pro-

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motes their knowledge and improvement, or their declension, their happiness or their misery, exultate or grieve me?

And when I look round on the smaller, particular society of persons, in which I live and act, how behave I there? How do I answer the obligations of a member of the community to which I belong? Is the welfare of the state a matter of real concern to me? Do I willingly submit to whatever is instituted, commanded, prohibited for its preservation and prosperity? Do I bear the burthens and limitations calculated to that end, without repining? Am I ready to sacrifice my personal interest to the general weal, and to promote it on all occasions even without any particular obligation and without reward, from my own mere motion, according to my ability? How do I acquit myself of the station, the office, the post, the dignity which the society has committed to my trust? Do I discharge the functions of it with diligence and conscientious fidelity? Do I never abuse it to the oppression and injury of the feeble, or to the gratification and indulgence of my passions? In the administration of it do I attend rather to others than to myself, or do I never abandon my duty from pride, from the love of ease, or of sensual gratifications? Do I disinterestedly and liberally support and encourage every public-spirited institution, every laudable undertaking, every beneficial attempt, every legitimate

timate design, that tends to the good of the body politic? Am I and do I afford to the society by the whole tenour of my deportment towards it and in it, that which I ought to be and to afford? Do I contribute my share to its intellectual and moral improvement? Do I oppose the torrent of prevailing corruption, effeminacy, prodigality, luxury? Do I set others an example of industry, diligence, sobriety, temperance, modesty, prudence, piety? Do I set them an example of all the domestic virtues?

Yes, how do I behave as the master, as the mistress of a family? Am I ashamed of that title and the duties it enjoins; or are they my glory and my joy? Are the hours, the evenings, that I pass at home, in the little circle of my children and family more agreeable and delightful, than the hours, the evenings, the nights, that I spend in brilliant, tumultuous companies, and in which I forget that in the mean time those little ones, weak and corruptible creatures, are left to themselves or to the care of hirelings? Is the education of my children, the formation of their mind and their heart, their training up to virtue and piety a matter of real importance to me? Do I actually employ myself in it and do I find pleasure in that employment? Do I say and do nothing in their presence that may be injurious to them, or mislead them into error and into sin? Do I readily in these respects give up a portion of my ease and

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convenience, all the pretensions of my vanity, and the parts I might act in grand company, however brilliant and amusing they might otherwise be? — And how do I acquit myself of the other relations and habitudes in which I stand to others, as kinsman, as intimate acquaintance, as friend? Do I endeavour to be and to afford to each of them whatever he has a right to expect that I should be and afford to him? Can not one of them justly complain of scorn, neglect, and indifference on my part? Do I readily effect and promote in the contracted circle of those that are nearest to me, as much good as I possibly can? Am I prompt to diffuse satisfaction and pleasure, light and comfort around me? Is my friendship sincere, unbiassed, generous, active? Is it compatible with the love of God and of my other brethren? Is it consonant to the dictates of wisdom and virtue? — Yet, I stand in still higher and nobler relations and connections. I know and honour God as my creator, my sovereign, my judge, my father. And how do I behave as such a votary of God? What effect does the knowledge of God produce in me? What influence has the belief in God, the belief in his providence and government on my conduct and on my peace? Do I continually recognize and apprehend my dependance upon him, and do I constantly think and act in conformity to that sentiment and conviction? Have I him, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, ever before my eyes,

eyes, and do I always avoid whatever has a tendency to displease him? And wherein consists the worship that I pay him? Is it fixed to certain places, confined to particular seasons? Consists it merely in cold observances, in rites and ceremonies? Or is it veneration of the heart and life, worship in spirit and in truth? Are the exercises of domestic and public devotion irksome to me; or are they recreating and delighting to me? Am I glad when I can neglect them on some pretence or other; or is it a grief to me when I am obliged to do so from duty or infirmity? Do I praise God with my body and with my spirit, and do I chiefly honour him by using everything, all that I am and have, all that he has given and entrusted to me, according to his will, and enjoy and do whatever I do and enjoy, in reference to him? Is it thus that I seek perpetually to maintain my correspondence with him, and do I daily derive from it energy to goodness, comfort in afflictions, hope in life and in death? And as I principally am indebted to Jesus Christ, my lord, for this knowledge of God, how lastly do I behave as his confessor, as a christian? Am I such in deed and in truth? Do I willingly and readily resign myself to the guidance of Jesus on the road of happiness? Do I tread in his steps? Do I propose his temper and his life as a model for mine? In all that I do, do I look to him, my leader and antecessor? Am I reaching out per-

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petually at a nearer assimilation with him? Do I exert myself in some degree to fill his office among mankind by prosecuting his work on earth? Can it be easily perceived, do my words and works testify, that I am a follower of the humble, the meek, the beneficent, the conciliating Jesus, in his entire resignation to God, in his voluntary privations and in living more for others than for himself? Is the gospel, is christianity divine power, divine wisdom to me? What delight then, what consolation, what efficacy does it yield me? By what am I distinguished from those that are not christians? What do I more or otherwise than they? How far am I actually wiser, better, more contented, more happy than they?

Interrogatories, my pious hearers, the investigation and reply to which are necessary to self-examination concerning our dispositions and our conduct. How various, how important! Indeed none can remember them all; perhaps none can at once decidedly answer them all. But neither was that the design of my discourse. I intended only to shew you, to what in our self-examination we should direct our attention, and what clue we may follow. Make use of these directions in the hours of calm reflection, to which the approaching communion invites you; each according to his capacities, according to his sagacity, according to his particular situation. Then ask yourselves, that I may once more put the sounding-line into your hand,

hand, at such times ask yourselves how you are disposed towards God, towards mankind, towards virtue and towards vice, how in prosperity and in adversity, how towards the present and towards the future. Question yourselves how you behave as men, as subjects, as heads of families, as friends, as votaries of God, as christians. And do it in the sincere design of discovering the true state of your moral condition and the grounds of your hope. Do it therefore with seriousness, with impartiality, with a wholesome severity : do it as in the presence of God, and then follow faithfully and without delay whatever your conscience, in the place of God, shall tell you. Thus will you fulfil your duty, and by the discharge of it become continually better and more happy. Amen.

SERMON XLI.

*Self-examination with a view to the Rite of the
sacred Supper.*

GOD, our most gracious father, what means of instruction, of improvement, of inward peace, of happiness, hast thou in thy bounty vouchsafed us! Again thou invitest us to celebrate and to rejoice in thy mercies: and what nourishment, what refreshment, what consolation may we reap from these festivals, to our rational, our immortal spirit! What noble relaxation from more laborious and inferior occupations! How much more delighted may it be in its existence, in its faculties, in its destination and its blessed relations towards thee, the creator and father of spirits! Oh might we so fit ourselves for the reception and enjoyment of these benefits and blessings, as their superlative value and thy gracious designs require! We are now assembled before thee, to excite and prepare ourselves for it. Send down thy light and thy efficacy upon us, that we may accomplish it with true earnestness, with strict impartiality, and good
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success. Let the thought of thee, the Omniscient and Omnipresent, open our hearts to the voice of truth, and close all access to the illusions of self-love. Grant that we may so honestly and sincerely conduct our trial and examination before thee, that we may acquire a thorough knowledge of ourselves and pass sentence accordingly. Yes, may we all, who profess to be the votaries of thy son Jesus, and as such intend to celebrate his memory at his table, may we all on solid grounds decide in secret, whether we are so indeed and in truth, or not, whether we are really actuated and governed by christian sentiments, or whether we are still destitute of them! Assist us in this grave and important transaction, most merciful God; grant that every one of us may turn his whole attention on himself, and hear and obey what his heart and his conscience on thy part shall tell him. These our petitions we offer up unto thee with filial confidence as christians, and address thee further in the name of Jesus Christ, our lord: Our father, &c.

1 COR. xi. 28.

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.

WE frequently recur to the doctrine of self-examination, my pious hearers, and represent it to you on various sides and to different ends. Oft has it already been the subject of our christian reflections,

flections, and even my present discourse is designed for our exercise in that occupation. At this you will not, you cannot be surprised if you understand and consider the importance of the object. Among all the means of improvement, of obtaining tranquillity and happiness, which reason and christianity afford us, certainly not one more surely and perceptibly promotes those views, than self-examination, if conducted as it ought to be. The oftener we engage in silent, serious conversation with ourselves; the oftener we submit our thoughts, our views, our actions, to the severe and decisive test of a calm discussion within; the more intimately we become acquainted with our own hearts: the better shall we understand the sources of human happiness and of human misery; and the easier will it be for us, to avoid or to shut up the latter. and to draw our fill of force and joy from the former. Only thus can we learn to discriminate between reality and appearance, and to separate ourselves from externals, from what does not essentially appertain to us. And this is undoubtedly the firmest foundation of all true wisdom, of all durable satisfaction and happiness. Let us then to-day employ these resources, on being invited to the approaching celebration of the lord's supper, in order to fit us for being worthy partakers of it. On a former occasion we divided the self-examination of a christian under two special heads, that is to say, into general and particular.

particular. On the former, which relates to our temper and our conduct in general, or to the whole of our moral state, and which we should, not only on certain solemn occasions, but very frequently engage in, we expatiated at that time. The latter, which particularly respects the purposed attendance on the sacred supper, is now to be the subject of our reflections. Let a man, says the apostle in our text, examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. How and concerning what should we then try ourselves preparatory to the holy supper and with reference to the reception of it, if we would comply with the precept of the apostle, and worthily celebrate that religious act? Three leading questions, my pious hearers, immediately arise in our minds. The first: What notions do I form of the holy supper? How do I represent this sacred act to myself? The next: In what views do I intend to perform it? And the third: Am I really in that frame of mind which is suitable to it?

First therefore: What notions do I form of the holy supper? How do I represent that sacred act to myself? That I eat bread and drink wine at the table of the Lord; and do so with particular solemnity and reverence, cannot certainly be the principal object in that religious act. The mere participation in that bread and that wine cannot certainly be either so eminently pleasing to God and his son Jesus, or produce in me such altera-
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tions and effects, as to enable me to be satisfied with it and to rest therein. No, here my spirit is to be nourished, strengthened, comforted, cheered; and this can no otherwise be done than in a manner adequate to its nature, in a moral sense, no otherwise than by ideas of the mind and affections of the heart. That which I here see with my eyes and touch with my hands, these consecrated symbols of the body and blood of my lord, are calculated to render absent objects in a manner present to me, the invisible in a manner visible, to urge and excite me to reflect upon them, to facilitate that reflection, and to give it the greater importance to me, by my engaging in it so solemnly and in common with my brethren. It is therefore of the utmost consequence that I do not lose sight of the tenour and purport of the whole transaction, that I have a lively sense of it, and dilate my heart to the emotions which that idea is designed and adapted to excite. And that design, that purport immediately occurs to the mind; it is no less simple and comprehensible, than important and profitable both to the mind and to the heart. Do this, says our lord, in remembrance of me. — Yes, I behold that affectionate magnanimous lord, when about to offer himself up for his followers and to leave the world; I behold him, absorbed in serious and sublime meditation, sitting amongst his disciples and friends, taking the last convivial repast with them,

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preparing them by suitable discourses and actions for his nearly approaching death, interested and partaking in the grief that overwhelmed them, assuring them of his constant affection, taking a friendly and tender leave of them, and commending himself to their remembrance. Take, eat, says he, this is my body which is given for you : take, drink, this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you ; do this in remembrance of me. Thus, as often as ye meet together, after my departure, at a friendly meal, thus let the bread and the cup go round among you ; and then think on this serious, solemn hour of bidding farewell, as ye say to one another : Thus did the lord take the bread, thus did he break it, thus did he divide it among us, thus did he cause the cup of thanksgiving to pass from hand to hand, thus spake he of his approaching death, thus commended he his memorial to us, and so went he voluntarily and undauntedly to face his sufferings, and gave himself an offering for us and for the best interests of mankind. And thus was the whole of this everlastingly memorable transaction a farewell repast of the householder parting from his family, of the teacher from his scholars, of the friend from his friends ; a parting-meal of the greatest benefactor and deliverer of mankind separating from his apostles and followers, who were to prosecute his work on earth and supply his place among their brethren.

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To me, who have not seen the lord, yet love him and glory in him, and hope hereafter to behold him, to me it is therefore a commemorative repast of his unprecedented love, of his unmerited and magnanimous sufferings, of his saving death ; a commemoration of all that he did on earth for the best interests of mankind, and therefore what he did, taught, instituted, suffered and endured for my best interest. Here then I am reminded of the teacher of truth and virtue sent from God, of the grand promoter and restorer of the human dignity and happiness, of the mighty deliverer from error and captivity and sin and the fear of death and the grave, of the exalted mediator between God and man ; who brought the deity nearer to us and us to the deity, proclaimed his parental dispositions to the human race, and inspired us with filial dispositions to him, and who by his great work on earth diffused far more light and comfort and spiritual life and hope and confidence and joy and felicity among mankind, than any sage, any lawgiver, any benefactor to the species had ever done before him, or could do. Blessed, for ever blessed be his memory to me and to all mankind ! It is the memory of the sublimest virtue and magnanimity ; the memory of our liberation and rescue from the direst evils, from the most oppressive burdens ; the memory of all that is able to soothe, strengthen, solace and revive us ; it is the most important, consolatory

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commemoration, that mankind, who are so weak and frail, and yet rational and designed for immortality, can celebrate.

A second leading question which we should propose in our self-examination respecting the rite of the sacred supper, is this: in what views do I intend to celebrate this solemn act? Are these views adequate to the nature of the subject and its design? Are they worthy of a rational votary of God, of a well-taught and reflecting christian? Can I give an account of them to myself and others? Or am I impelled to the table of the lord by a sort of superstitious anxiety, a certain blind reverence for objects that I cannot comprehend? Is it surrounded to me with light or with darkness, with terrors or with motives to confidence and joy? Or do I approach it perhaps entirely from habit, because I have done so from my youth up, because I see so many others do so, because it has been constantly represented to me as a duty, because I should be unwilling to lay myself open to the suspicion that I act contrary to my religious profession, or of being indifferent towards religion and christianity? Is that to worship God in spirit and in truth? Can such a supine, mechanical celebration of that solemnity procure me the least real benefit? Should I not thus rather make a mock of God and religion? — What then is it properly that I seek in the observance of this religious rite and expect from it? What shall I prin-

principally do at the table of the lord? — Do I hope somehow by that sacred act to obtain the forgiveness of my sins, to throw off the load of guilt that sits heavily upon me, to relieve my conscience, and afterwards as it were to sin again on a fresh score? Dare I directly avow that to be my design? Would not my own heart, the inward sense of truth, revolt against it? Is it not in opposition to all that I know concerning God and his will, and of the terms on which he will pardon sinful beings and forgive them their sins? Are not sin and misery inseparable in their very nature, linked together as cause and effect? How can the latter cease so long as the former continues? Are not virtue and happiness just as intimately, just as indissolubly conjoined? How can one subsist without the other? How could even the Almighty, without forming me anew, remove my misery and make me happy, unless I actually abandon sin and practise virtue? No; without actual amendment no forgiveness of sins is possible. As soon as one takes place the other follows. Am I by the doctrine of Jesus a corrected man, am I a christian who sins no more though he errs and fails both in speculation and practice; the supper of my lord certifies me of the forgiveness of sins, of the grace and favour of God, and inspires me with trust in him; but never can this act of itself procure me that benefit and advantage. — Or would I, as I so often hear others

others speak, somehow by the rite of the sacred supper reconcile God to me? But God has never been inimical towards me. He has always loved me as a father, always designed me well, and done me good, even when I sinned and acted wickedly; and Jesus has placed his parental dispositions towards me and all mankind beyond a doubt. God is also much too holy and just, much too perfect, ever to judge otherwise than according to truth, or to account me better or worse than I really am. How could therefore a ceremony, an outward act, alter his dispositions towards me, or procure me his favour and complacency, unless I be susceptible of it? And if I have dispositions that are hostile to God, or are at enmity with my relations to him; if I be not actuated by filial obedience to him and filial love of him and filial trust in him, but stubbornness and servile dread keep me at a distance from him, I ought certainly to correct and alter myself. But by the mere attendance on the rite of the sacred supper I shall be neither altered nor corrected. It may indeed urge me to that effect and revive and confirm my good resolutions. But the alteration and amendment itself can only be the fruit of continued efforts and exertions. No; to place me in the proper relations to God, to think and to act consistently with my relations to him, and thereby to draw nearer to him and to have a growing communication with him, that cannot be the work of only a few moments

ments or hours, it must be the duty and the business of my whole life. No ; the sacred supper is not a means of reconciliation, but a solemn, public memorial of the grand reconcilment of God, and his eternal, unchangeable grace and love towards man. — — Or do I somehow flatter myself, that the testimony I here give of my reverence for God, of my faith in Jesus, of my religious profession, compensates the defect of my virtue and piety, or supplies their place? Can then a momentary sensation of strength compensate the general deficiency of health and vigour ; can a fleeting, transient pleasure supply the want of happiness? Can the means fill the place of the end? Can I reach the term of my career, if I only at times move a few paces towards it, and then stand still or retreat? How could then a single good and religious act, though never so sincere, supply the absence of virtue and piety or occupy their room? No ; virtue and piety are not things confined to certain times and places ; they are sentiments, affections, pursuits that should actuate and govern us at all times and in all places, and only then have any real value when they are the companions and guides of our whole lives. Far be it then from me to approach the lord's table in such superstitious, hypocritical views, and there attempt to deceive God and mankind and myself!

No ; knowledge, sagacity, reflection, devout sentiments and feelings, shall attend me thither.

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Here is nourishment for my mind and for my heart; and both of them may and shall be occupied in a manner no less rational than comfortable and noble. Here will I confess before God and the world, that I am a christian, a disciple and votary of Jesus, that I own him for the great preacher of righteousness, a teacher of truth commissioned from God, for the grand deliverer and benefactor of mankind, for my lord and master, and accept his doctrine as divine truth, as the surest way to supreme felicity; and to be this and to confess this I hold my honour and my happiness. Yes, I rejoice and glory in being a christian, and feel how forcibly I am bound as such, to think and to act more nobly, to do and to encourage more good, to live more contentedly and to suffer more patiently, and to urge my course after higher perfection, than those who are fain to dispense with that rare happiness. Yes; that holy, that heavenly doctrine is calculated to teach and conduct me, to communicate light to my ignorance, strength and energy to my weakness, and to be my consolation in life and in death. Here will I therefore, in common with all his confessors, celebrate the memorial of its exalted founder, my lord and saviour, recollect with them his beneficent life, his unmerited, holy sufferings, his magnanimous death, and his glorious triumph over death and the grave, bring within sight and present to my soul, as far as possible, my absent, invisible

visible friend, accompany him as it were along the gloomy, dolorous path that conducted him to his completion, cordially rejoice in the various and strict connections in which I stand with him, and the special privileges and felicities which they have already procured and still hold out to me, and publicly and solemnly together with all my brethren thank him for them. Yes, joy in the lord and thanksgiving for his grace and love shall here be my peculiar occupation. His festival is the feast of joy and gratitude to all that know and love and have communion with him. Here will I renew my vows of fealty and allegiance due to him as my deliverer and lord, renew my resolutions to obey his commands, to imitate his virtuous, pious, generally useful life, to prosecute his great work on earth, and confirm myself in that temper of mind which is peculiar to his adherents and followers, and is adapted to render them the wisest and best among the wise and good. Like him to promote truth, virtue, liberty, contentment and happiness among my brethren, to live rather for others than for myself, and readily to sacrifice myself for others; to all this shall I acquire fresh courage and strength from the remembrance of him. The hope of that blessed immortality and the eternal life, which he brought to light and placed beyond all argument by his death and by his resurrection from the dead, shall raise me above the objects of sense, direct thither my principal aspirations

rations and affections where he, my captain and my forerunner, is, and teach me with unflagging ardour to walk the way by which he attained the prize of perfection and is entered into glory. Here finally will I unite myself with all my brethren near and afar off by the enjoyment of this repast of friendship and affection, and confirm myself in the sentiments of esteem, of benevolence and of beneficence, which should actuate us as persons, who not only by the ties of nature, but also by the ties of religion, by the ties of faith and hope are so closely allied, and who here rejoice in their common benefactor and lord, their friend and firstborn brother, and their general felicity. Yes, in such views will I perform this sacred act. This shall employ my understanding and my heart at the table of the lord. This spiritual generous food will I there seek and enjoy. Thus alone shall I think and act agreeably to the design of this religious rite, and worship God and his son Jesus in spirit and in truth.

The third leading question which we should propose to ourselves in our self-examination with reference to the rite of the sacred supper, is this: Am I now in that frame of mind that is suited to the celebration of that solemn act? Am I really actuated by christian sentiments? Do I perceive, do I feel the high value of the objects the memorial whereof I am going to celebrate? Are they often present to my mind and always interesting

to my heart? Or are they foreign and indifferent to me? Do I contemplate them as objects that deserve my utmost attention, that concern me most nearly, that are strictly allied to my happiness? Or do I think of them with as little participation, as of occurrences which, however extraordinary, yet are of no consequence to us, and stand in no analogy with our destinies? Do I perceive therefore with full conviction the comfortable, the grand, the divine qualities in the provisions which God has made by his son Jesus for the exaltation of mankind, and do they exhilarate my soul? Do I perceive and feel what great merit Jesus has acquired in behalf of me and of the whole human race by his grand work on earth? Do I perceive and feel, how ignorant and doubtful in concerns of the last importance to me, how corrupt, how comfortless, how vicious, how wretched I should have been without this succour; and how much light, how much comfort, how much energy to goodness, how much hope and affiance, how much joy in the present and in the future life I have to be grateful for to this great deliverer and benefactor of mankind? — And how am I affected towards him? Do I think of him with that profound reverence, with that heartfelt gratitude, with that fervent love, which his character, his benefits and his merits demand? Do I hold him what he is, and do I revere him as such with my whole heart? Are his doctrines,

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his commands, his example that to me which they ought to be? The rule of my thoughts and my conduct, the model of human perfection and the incentive to unwearied exertions after it? Am I sincerely devoted to him, prompt to obey him, and although I have not seen him, do I rejoice in him with cordial delight? — Is sin, for the extirpation and abolition whereof he humbled himself so far, did and endured so much, and at last became obedient unto death even the death of the cross, thoroughly hateful to me? Do I reckon it that great, that dreadful evil which it is and must be, since to the diminution of its authority and to our deliverance from it such extraordinary events took place? Have I as a christian entirely forsaken sin and for ever, and as such do I labour with unabated efforts at my improvement and sanctification? — And how, lastly, am I affected towards my brethren, in company with whom I am here to celebrate the memorial of our lord? Do I actually own them for brethren, without regard to rank and station, to high and low? Do I love and esteem them as such? Does neither envy nor hatred, nor animosity, nor malice, nor apathy accompany me to this repast of brotherly-love? Am I as placable towards my enemies as Jesus was? Have I forgiven all that have injured me, as he forgave them that injured him? Is his universal charity the pattern of mine? Yes; if that which I am here to contemplate and do, be

so interesting to me; if it so employ my understanding and my heart, and these occupations are not strange, not irksome to me, but familiar, customary and agreeable; if I be so minded towards Jesus, so towards sin and towards virtue, so towards all christians, all my species: then am I in that frame of mind which is proper for the worthy celebration of the sacred supper, then I am actuated by those sentiments and affections, which should actuate me at this solemn transaction, in order that it may procure me utility and comfort.

If you would rejoice in that utility and that comfort, my pious hearers, neglect not to enter upon this self-examination, and to do it with that seriousness and that impartiality which the importance of the subject demands. To this end collect your scattered thoughts. Seek stillness and abstraction from the body and from the world. Commune with your own heart concerning all that we have now been discoursing to you upon. Employ at least a part of this week, consecrated to the memory of the most interesting of all events, to the memory of Jesus and his sufferings and death, in serious meditations, in rational exercises of devotion. Thus prepare yourselves for the approaching festival and communion. Previously make yourselves thoroughly versed in what you are then to do and in what you are to be employed. In this way collect matter for devout religious

ligious sentiments and emotions, open even now every avenue of your hearts to their salutary influence, that you may then represent to yourselves in their full light the important, comfortable doctrines of religion of which we shall there be reminded, evince their complete efficacy in you, and pervade you with that love, that joy, that gratitude, that hope and reliance for which we are beholden to God, and to his son Jesus Christ. Then, but only then, will those days be real festivals, days of recreation and refreshment to your rational, immortal spirits, days of foretaste of that superior and better life, which it is our business here to prepare and fit ourselves for.

Passion week.

SERMON XLII.

The Advantages of virtuous Industry.

GOD, who art our supreme ruler and lawgiver, all thy commandments are just and right; they all manifestly tend to our happiness. Every duty which thou hast enjoined us, is a means of satisfaction and a source of pleasure; every virtue that thou requirest of us, is its own reward. It is only ignorance and want of reflection, only base and sordid passions that cause us sometimes to deem thy laws a burden, and to complain of them as an oppressive yoke. Oh might we ever learn to think in this respect more justly! How greatly should we thus alleviate the journey of life! How much more satisfaction and pleasure enjoy on it! Thou hast subjected us in the present state to a variety of urgent necessities which we cannot supply without labour and toil. Thou causest us all to meet with many obstacles and difficulties on this earthly pilgrimage, which without the application and exertion of our powers we are not able to conquer and to surmount. Thou hast placed

placed us all in various relations and habitudes to each other, which urge and oblige us to unre-mitted industry in occupations of general utility. Thou hast ordained that we should work out, purchase, earn the accommodations and pleasures as well as the necessities of life. And so must it be, if we would properly unfold and exercise our faculties, if we would become intelligent and virtuous, if we would truly rejoice in existence, if we would here attain the true ends of our crea-tion, and fit ourselves for a superior, a better life. Teach thou us thoroughly to understand this truth, most gracious father, that the accomplish-ment of our duty may ever become easier and the practice of goodness more delightful to us. Bless in that view even the considerations that are now to employ our thoughts. Let us thereby be sti-mulated and invigorated to cheerful, indefatigable industry in the conscientious discharge of the functions of our calling, and continually become more capable of the various advantages it pro-cures. For these benefits we pray thee, as thy children, in constant reliance on thy bounty, and humbly address thee further in the name of thy son, our lord and saviour : Our father, &c.

PROV. X. 4.

He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand ; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

Luther's translation : Lazy hands make poor ; but the industrious hand maketh rich.

THE sight of uncommon industry and diligence among a considerable body of people ; to see how they apply their mental and corporeal powers, their natural talents and their acquired dexterity and ingenuity, so willingly, so unremittingly, and in such a diversity of ways ; to observe how they pursue certain aims so assiduously and so indefatigably, and so carefully employ all the means conducive to their end : affords unquestionably to every thinking and humane person an extremely interesting and delightful spectacle. He there sees man acting agreeably to his destination here on earth, sees him put forth and exercise his faculties, and thereby promote his own perfection and happiness, and at the same time the perfection and happiness of the whole, in various ways partly to himself unknown. And this entertaining spectacle is afforded us particularly at such times as the present, when trade and commerce are occasioning the greatest and most diversified activity among so many orders and classes of mankind.

It is not everyone however who holds this greater industry and diligence a real benefit to mankind. Numbers are heard to complain of it as an oppressive

sive burden to themselves and others. Many long for repose and inaction, and indeed propose that rest as the end and aim of their present exertions. I mean not to deny the troubles that are connected with it; I will even grant that they frequently over-balance the profits and pleasures that might be expected from it. But these very troubles would be greatly alleviated to us, these very profits and pleasures would be greatly multiplied and enhanced, if we went less mechanically to work, if we employed more reflection and consideration in our business, if we considered the matter not entirely on one side, but on several, and as much as possible on all sides. And to this purpose, my pious hearers, I am desirous of contributing somewhat by my present discourse. Lazy hands, says our text, make poor; but the industrious, the diligent hand, maketh rich. Riches are in fact often the effects of industry. If however that be not uniformly the case, yet it is attended by other not less and even greater advantages and gratifications, which more than indemnify us for the want of the former. And this it is, my pious hearers, upon which I am now inclined to engage with you in some reflections. I would teach you to consider industry not simply as a duty, but as an agreeable duty amply rewarding itself. The industry that is founded on just views and perceptions, and blended with good, religious sentiments, is absolutely entitled to an
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important station among the human virtues. And as all the virtues are their own reward, by conferring happiness even at present on their friends, so likewise does the virtue of industry. Her ways too, as the wise man speaks, are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, and lead to happiness. In order to illustrate this position, we will in the first place point out, when and how far industry is a virtue; and afterwards consider the manifold utility, the great advantages of it.

*Every species of industry is not virtue. Often, too often, it is merely the effect of constraint or of cogent necessity. Often, too often, it is the offspring of avarice, of ambition, or some other sordid passion. Frequently it is also the mere result of habit, a kind of mechanically acquired application of our faculties, in which neither our understanding nor our heart have any share. Even in such cases it is doubtless good, more or less, always far preferable to idleness, as procuring both to the individual and to society in general many solid advantages. Still however it is not virtue. It is only so when it is bottomed on such a temper and conduct as is agreeable to the laws of truth and order, to the will of God; when a man has at the same time the true end of his being in view, and pursues such aims as are consonant to it; when love and obedience to God, and the desire of promoting his own perfection together with the public interest urge him to it and preserve him

him unwearied in it ; when he is fond of industry as industry, and is even then fond of it when its effects do not correspond with his wishes or expectations. It is not the nature of the industry and business, that we prosecute ; not that which we bring to effect without us by it : but it is the temper and frame of mind, in which we do all this, and the sentiments, which actuate and fortify us in it, that render industry a virtue. And what then is this state of mind ? What are these sentiments ? The man whose industry is a virtue says thus to himself : All my capacities and abilities are from God, all my talents and skill, all my excellencies and endowments are gifts of his providence. His sovereign wisdom gave them to me certainly not without design ; the employment of them is not left to my caprice. As everything in the whole extent of nature is in never ceasing motion and activity, producing and cherishing life and joy and perfection and happiness all around : so likewise ought man in his station and according to the measure of his abilities, to contribute whatever he can to the same effect. And this can I no otherwise and no better do than by rational, continued, unabated industry in my station and calling. I am a subject in the empire of God ; I belong to the great family of his children on earth. By the diligent and faithful application of my faculties and endowments I ought to promote the interests of his empire, the welfare of his children,

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my brethren and sisters. I am an instrument in the hand of God, by which he intends to prosecute his designs, by which he, our father in heaven, means to gladden and bless a multitude of other persons ; and the more faithfully I labour in my vocation, the more conscientiously I carry on my business, the more may I make it my boast and my glory that I concur in his views and prosecute his work on earth. I live here in a state of education and discipline : and I cannot live conformably to that state unless I employ, exert my faculties, and thereby increase and strengthen them. I stand in a variety of relations and habitudes to my fellow-creatures, cannot dispense with their assistance and support, receive numberless kind offices from them daily : and what a number of obligations does all this lay me under, on my part to be as useful to them and to afford them as many services as I possibly can. Yes, man is designed for an active, industrious, diligent life. This is plainly apparent from all the constitutions and settlements that God has established in nature, from the various wants to which he has subjected mankind, from the capacities and instincts which he has planted in them. Would I fulfil the will of God ; would I behave as a dutiful subject in his empire ; would I obey the express laws of religion ; would I reach the proper end of my being, and here become and do what I should do and become : I must be industrious. And how else can I evince
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my gratitude to God for all his gifts and bounties, than by the faithful employment of them? How can I testify my love to my brethren otherwise than by promoting their welfare with unabated ardour? How can I fit myself for higher matters and occupations in the future state, except by doing with diligence and fidelity what I have to do in the present state, and by finishing my task on earth in a way well-pleasing to God? Whoever thinks in this manner, is thus inclined, and diligently attends to the affairs of his calling in such dispositions, his industry is virtue. It is the result of right principles, well-regulated affections and generous purposes. My industry is therefore virtue if I prosecute it with a view to God and from obedience to his will; if I in it revere his establishments in the natural and moral world, and apply myself to it with satisfaction and pleasure, and think and act consistently with it; if I am actuated in it by that public-minded universal-christian charity and benevolence, which seeks its own happiness in that of its fellow-creatures, and renders every work easy and agreeable to me even when it yields me no outward profit. It is virtue, if I allow no casual obstacles and difficulties to deter and dishearten me; if I combat and vanquish the allurements and temptations to a lazy, indolent, delicate life, and in the faithful application of my abilities, in the conscientious discharge of my duty, seek and find my pleasure.

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Let us now, my pious hearers, discuss a little more circumstantially the advantages of industry in general, and of such a virtuous industry in particular.

First, it is immediately apparent to every one, that the industrious man performs and accomplishes very many things which are profitable to himself and others in numberless respects. How numerous his own wants and those of others which he thus relieves! How many anxious cares and troubles does he thus prevent! How many the sources of welfare which he opens to himself and others! How largely he contributes to the general interest of society! How many the necessities, or accommodations, or pleasures which he procures it, how many the services he affords it! By how many different handles does he in his situation and in his calling push forward the mighty wheel, without the regular and constant rotation whereof the social welfare could not subsist! And this does every industrious man, in what station soever he be, in whatever work he is employed. Let his station be never so humble, yet that which he does in it has influence more or less on all other stations. If he completely fulfil his duty, every other can the more uninterruptedly and completely fulfil his. If one wheel of a machine, be it small or great, move properly, all the others that are connected with it, move the more easily and free from obstruction. Industry not unfrequently supplies the

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the want of eminent abilities ; diligence and assiduity the deficiency of great genius. Let the faculties, the endowments of a man be never so confined, yet by patient, uninterrupted application he can perform incredibly much ; often far more than he, who with eminent powers of intellect is indolent or slothful, or gives himself up to a dissipated effeminate life.

If the industrious man executes many useful matters he executes them secondly with far more ease and dexterity than if he were not industrious. He has no need of long preliminary debate with himself ; of previously exciting and encouraging himself to it by various remonstrances ; of much previous consideration how he shall set about the business, or whether he shall begin it at all. He understands, he loves the work ; has a proper confidence in himself ; recollects how many similar works he has already undertaken and finished ; attacks the business with alacrity and spirit ; pursues it with goodwill ; knows how to provide for the eventual obstructions and difficulties by acquired ingenuity, or by continued application ; and is more or less sure of success. The indolent, the dilatory man on the contrary is frightened at every kind of work, which he cannot immediately finish, at every business that requires time and exertion to execute. For want of practice and experience he seldom rightly knows how to commence and to accomplish it, sighs under the burthen it imposes

on him ; frequently interrupts his proceedings ; works with impatience, with drowsiness, with reluctance ; and if he do not drop it entirely, he makes it more troublesome to himself in various ways.

The industrious man unfolds, exercises, perfects, thirdly, his faculties ; not only his mechanical, but also his nobler, his intellectual faculties. And this he does alike in every vocation which he assiduously follows, by every occupation in which he strenuously engages. Because it is not of so much consequence to what we apply our intellectual faculties, as how we employ them. Whether we apply them to the government of a nation or to the government of a family, whether to the learning and exercise of an art or science, or to the learning and exercise of some useful trade : it makes no material difference. But, whether we engage in one or the other, to learn to think methodically and justly, to act as rational beings, with consideration and upon fixed principles, are masters of ourselves, moderate and controul our desires, give our inclinations and abilities the best direction, do what we have to do, deliberately, carefully, punctiliously, conscientiously : that is the main concern. And that we may learn and do by virtuous diligence in every station, in every business. Virtuous industry or diligence is a continual exercise of the understanding, of reason, of reflection, of self-command. It is likewise a continual

tinual exercise of obedience to God, of contentedness with his ordinances and dispensations, of trust in his assistance and his support; a continual exercise of benevolence and of beneficence, of patience and forbearance, of kindness and civility to others; a continual exercise of generosity, of resolution, of fortitude and vigour of mind. How many obstacles are frequently to be surmounted, how many greater and smaller difficulties to be vanquished, how many attacks of languor or of ill humour to be resisted, how many persons of opposite tempers to be managed and satisfied, how many apparent advantages to be rejected, how many sacrifices to duty and the public good to be made! And what excellent exercises of wisdom and virtue are all these! How greatly must they advance our spiritual perfection, the only thing that we can take with us out of the present into the future world! And how greatly does this acquisition excell all the honour, all the wealth, all outward emoluments that can any otherwise be extorted by industry!

The industrious man lives fourthly in the true, intimate, entire consciousness of himself, and of that which he is and does. He actually rejoices in his life, his faculties, his endowments, his time. He can give an account of the use and application of them. He knows what he has attempted and accomplished with them. He never forgets the true end of his being, either as a man or as a christian, is never unmindful of his relations to God

and to his neighbour, and always thinks and acts consistently with them. If the idler or the sluggard passes through life as it were in a dream, and knows not what he has done with his faculties, what is become of his time, how he has attained to the present period of his age : yet the industrious man has an inward perspicuous consciousness of all this. He has lived with intelligence and consideration ; is acquainted with the road that he has passed, and the most important steps he has made on it. His faculties have not been wasted ; his time has not been lost ; he knows what he has performed with the former, and in what he has employed the latter. All the days and weeks and years that he has already passed, are marked by useful works and transactions, so that he can never forget them. The conscious sense of himself, is immediately associated with the conscious sense of all that he has done and is become, and the apprehension of his existence is at the same time the apprehension of his multifarious activity ; and how much more lively must that idea, how much more intimate and exhilarating must this sentiment thus become ! — — For the same reason the industrious man can always look back upon the past with satisfaction, and without disquietude dart his view into futurity. The former, the past, shews him a long series of good, useful pursuits and occupations, by which he has promoted his own perfection and the interest of society ; and the latter,

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the future, allows him to hope for the enjoyment of the fruits of his labours, and discovers to him new means and opportunities of employing his talents and endowments, and thereby of effecting a variety of good. How totally different in this respect is the case with the man who shuns labour, and leads a lazy, loitering life! If he look back upon the past, he perceives only one dark void, or it is marked with follies, with childish amusements, with disappointed expectations. If he look forward to the future, the burden of it already oppresses him by anticipation, because he has no fixt object to pursue, no determinate occupation, that might allow him to hail the coming time with pleasure.

The industrious man, who is so from principle and inclination, experiences fifthly neither languor nor irksomeness. Never are his faculties, never is his time a burden to him. Never is he anxiously at a loss for a purpose to apply the former, on what to bestow the latter. He is never in want of some legitimate design, which he may prosecute farther, some ingenious and well-digested plan which he may execute, some useful work that he may undertake or complete. Various as are his abilities and endowments; various as are his own wants and those of other persons; extensive as is the range of human perfection and happiness: so diversified and extensive is the field of his industry and application. He who really loves work, can never be deficient in means and opportunities

r it ; to him every occupation is agreeable, even though it procure him no visible profit. He works, not merely to gain the means of subsistence, or to enrich himself, or to raise himself above others, but for the sake of working, and thereby for exercising his faculties and fulfilling his vocation. And how then can he ever feel the burden of languor and irksomeness ? No ; his hours, his days, his years, flow on not more quickly than cheerfully. Every smaller and larger portion of his time has its peculiar destination ; each brings its own work and business with it ; each lends a helping hand to the other, and none pass unemployed. If each has its own plague or trouble : each likewise has its own satisfaction and its particular advantage. Each carries us somewhat farther ; each conducts us a few paces nearer to the mark. And only thus, my dear friends, is life actually enjoyed, entirely enjoyed ; only thus do we truly rejoice in it ; never sighing under the burden of it ; never tired of it ; and finish our course sooner or later as comfortably as we have hitherto continued it.

The industrious man has sixthly a far greater relish for every innocent pleasure, for every relaxation that he enjoys. He alone properly knows the pleasure of rest ; for he alone really wants it ; he alone by the useful application and exertion of his powers has deserved it ; he alone can enjoy it without shame and without reproach. Only to the industrious man have the pleasures of society and

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the intercourse with his brethren any real and conspicuous worth. For he alone has any just pretensions to their esteem and affection; he alone, conscious of being a serviceable and useful member of society, can take an interest in their satisfactions and pleasures; he alone gives to others as much or even more than he receives from them. It is only the industrious man that knows and enjoys the pleasure of a well-spent day, a successful completion of work, a transaction terminated according to his wishes; he alone knows and enjoys the pleasure which obstacles surmounted, difficulties conquered, plans executed with prudence and resolution, procure mankind. And how great, how transcendently great are these pleasures! What an agreeable sensation of abilities, what self-complacency attends and enhances it! — And then how calmly can the industrious man resign himself to any innocent amusement! How entirely enjoy it! How well founded are his claims to it! How real the wants he satisfies by it! How honourable the intentions he means to answer by it! Yes, my dear friends, if ye would enjoy real, unalloyed pleasure: qualify yourselves previously for it by patient virtuous industry; purchase it first by the unabated and public minded application of your faculties. Pleasure, that is not earned, that is not purchased, of which we are not deserving, scarcely merits the name of pleasure.

To be brief, the industrious man alone corresponds with the design for which he is placed on earth, and may say so to himself, and may in the consciousness of it be contented and cheerful. He is and does that, which God, his creator and sovereign, wills, that he in his present state should be and do. He is and affords to mankind, his brethren, that, which he in his station, and agreeably to his relations and connections with them, should be and afford to them. He freely and fairly contributes his share to the preservation and the prosperity of the whole to which he belongs. He thereby fits himself likewise for his future superior destination, and attains here to that stage of understanding, of wisdom, of virtue, from which he shall hereafter proceed to higher stages of perfection and employment. He can boldly give account to himself, to his fellow-creatures, to God, how he has spent his life on earth, what he has done and afforded in it. His life was actual life, rational life; life that was to him and others fertile in good and profitable consequences, and will be so long after his death. And to know that, my dear friends, and to dare to say it: what a reward of virtuous industry! — How totally different is the case with the idler, the loiterer! What answer has he to make when his conscience, when God his judge, when mankind put the question to him: To what purpose art thou here? What hast

hast thou here done that is good and useful? How hast thou occupied the station that was assigned thee? How supported thy rank among the creatures of God? How employed thy capacities and faculties and endowments? What useful knowledge hast thou here acquired! In what hast thou exercised thyself! What solid and lasting advantages hast thou procured? What good dispositions and aptitudes, what recollections of good actions takest thou along with thee into the grave and into eternity? To stand mute and stupefied at these questions, and to be ashamed of one's existence and life, what a tormenting confusion, what an agonizing state must it be!

So certain and indubitable is it, my pious hearers, that the virtue of diligence or industry like every other virtue rewards itself in every way and in all respects, and that its advantages are extremely various and great, even though it procure us neither riches, nor affluence, nor any outward preferment. And let every one imprint this deeply on his mind, who is constantly urging on to perfection and happiness, and would not miss his aim! Let the sluggard, the dispirited, who is so seldom satisfied with himself and with the world, who is so often tormented with languor and disgust, let him seize and employ these sure means, to rid himself of his plagues and to enjoy his life and his faculties in a rational manner. Let him suffer the word of exhortation and be persuaded
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to embrace the virtue of industry, if he would be contented and cheerful. Let him rouse himself to diligence, to assiduity in his affairs, if he would attain the end of his being, accomplish the will of God, support his station in society, and secure its esteem, if he would taste the pure and diversified pleasure that is attached to a laborious public-minded life. — And the industrious man, who is industrious on principle and in good, pious dispositions, let him be sensible to his dignity and his general usefulness, let him rejoice in the manifold satisfactions and advantages which it procures him, and enjoy those satisfactions and advantages with a cheerful mind and in the certain hope that to him who has been faithful in the little that was entrusted to him here, far more will be committed and entrusted hereafter !

SERMON XLIII.

The Advantages of Moderation in the Enjoyment of sensual Pleasure.

GOD, by having endowed us with senses thou hast opened to us sources of knowledge and pleasure not less various than abundant. Thou hast placed us for a period of time in divers relations to the earth which we inhabit, and to its beauties and productions, subjected us to several wants and imposed on us different labours and occupations, which result from our present state, and which are calculated to render it no less agreeable than useful to us. And that on the present stage of existence we may improve and fit ourselves for a higher, thou hast granted us understanding and reason, and formed us free, moral agents. Furnished with these especial privileges and powers, it is thy will that we should master our sensual appetites and instincts, moderate ourselves in the use and application of them, raise our mind above what is terrestrial and visible, and in thought ascend to thee, our creator and father. No; we are not entirely flesh, not entirely and in every respect

respect the offspring of dust and corruption. We are of divine descent, we derive our origin from thee, we are destined by thee to immortality and to ever progressive perfection ! Oh teach us thoroughly to perceive the ~~quality~~ ^{condition} of our nature, and our sublime destination, and grant that we may conceive nothing, will nothing and do nothing, that is at variance with it. To cultivate still better our understanding, still more completely to controul our sensuality, and thus continually more to approach and more to resemble thee : oh may that be the constant endeavour of us all ! Bless to this end the doctrines of wisdom that are now to employ our thoughts. Let the advantages of moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure appear in so powerful a light to us, that we may always more willingly and punctually follow its rules. These our humble requests we present unto thee as votaries of thy son Jesus, with the ingenuous confidence of children, and implore thee further in his name : Our father, &c.

1 PET. v. 8.

Be sober.

CHRISTIANITY in its precepts and commands as well as in its doctrines, is precisely suited to our nature and our necessities. It refuses us nothing, that is really good and desirable. It requires of us nothing impossible, nothing that is in opposition to our happiness. It enjoins us
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to suppress and eradicate no natural appetites, to despise and reject no innoxious satisfactions and pleasures. It treats us not as entirely spiritual creatures; it is even equitable to our sensual instincts and wants, ~~it is~~ lenient towards our guiltless infirmities, and demands not of us the purity and perfection of superior beings. In the same spirit it requires of its followers with regard to sensual pleasure not total abstinence, but prudent moderation. That would lay us under a restraint, which we should not be able to endure, or crush us beneath its weight: this enhances and multiplies our pleasure, instead of violently ravishing it from us. Yes, my pious hearers, the soberness, the moderation which christianity and the apostle in our text recommend, is no troublesome restriction, no oppressive burden, to those who understand and practise it. It is rather the most abundant source of wisdom, of regularity, of satisfaction, of happiness; and this it is whereof I am desirous to convince you by my present discourse. We will first more precisely state the subject itself.

We are moderate in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, when the enjoyment of it neither hinders us in the performance of the duties of our station and calling, nor renders us languid and remiss in the fulfilment of them; when it neither abates our inclination for serious, laborious employment, nor weakens our relish for superior intellectual

tellectual pleasures ; when it is never so necessary to us, that we cannot decline it without uneasiness and discontent, or not without regret make it yield to our duty ; when in brief we never indulge in it as far as we can without visible detriment to our bodily and intellectual health and vigour, but rather stop on this side the borders of what is inculpable and harmless. Such a moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, whereof the moderation in eating and drinking and in the use of sensual voluptuousness forms a principal part, contributes uncommonly much to the happiness of human life, and is one of the richest sources of satisfaction and pleasure. We will now proceed to treat articulately of the principal advantages which it procures us, that we may more clearly perceive their worth, and study more assiduously to acquire them.

The temperate man preserves first by his temperance his health and vigour ; Health of body, health of mind, and alacrity and vigour both of the one and of the other. If the voluptuary, by passionately pursuing any kind of sensual pleasure, disorders his body and enervates his mind ; if he exhausts and ruins the powers of one and the other by abuse before they have attained their complete vigour ; if when arrived at maturity, or even while yet a youth he frequently complains of the debilities and pains of age ; and is forced to see the end of his short dream of life approaching,

proaching, a life consumed in the intoxication of animal lusts, ere he has begun properly to use and to enjoy it; if this be the common fate of the voluptuary, what a totally different lot may in most instances the temperate man promise himself! His intellectual and corporeal faculties unfold themselves freely, they strengthen with his years, he can use them with alacrity and confidence, and exercise and invigorate them by discreet employment. Instead of disturbing nature in her regular course and in her ordinary operations, he follows her dictates, avoids all that is forced or excessive, ~~is~~ and does and enjoys that, which he should be and do and enjoy, and has no need to dread the baleful consequences of an overstrained constitution or of disabled faculties. His abilities are commensurate with his occupations and labours, and he rarely has occasion violently to exert the one, in order to execute the other. He never forgets what he may reasonably trust he can perform or not, and proportions his undertakings accordingly. If notwithstanding in consequence of the natural combination of things pains and sicknesses come upon him, he can calmly and irreproachably bear them as unmerited evils, and consider them as dispensations calculated to answer some higher end and interwoven with a whole, which he necessarily must revere as the best. And if at length his faculties sooner or later decline as he approaches the term.

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of his earthly career, yet he has neither dreamed out his life nor fooled it away, he has enjoyed it like a wise man, like a christian, he has employed it to the end for which it was granted him by his creator, he can give an account of the use he has made of it, it was neither empty of facts nor of joy : and how greatly must this alleviate to him the sense of his declining faculties and cheer the evening of his life !

Moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure enhances secondly the very enjoyment of that pleasure in various ways. The moderate man knows nothing of that languor and disgust, which generally treads on the heels of the voluptuary, so frequently embittering his pleasures, so frequently rendering them insipid to him, and so seldom allowing him to enjoy them completely. The more sparingly and rarely the moderate man indulges in certain kinds of pleasure, the more susceptible he is of them, and the more completely he relishes their sweets. They constantly retain new charms for him, as he never riots in them to satiety and surfeit. He imbibes refreshment and strength, but not intoxication and fury from the goblet of mirth. He lets the want first arise, the craving of nature first awake, become urgent to a certain degree, ere he proceeds to gratify it : and how much more delicious must even the commonest gratification of a real want, of a craving excited by nature be, than the enjoyment
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of all that art has invented for stimulating and gratifying imaginary and unnatural wants and desires! How much more relish does the moderate, the industrious man find in the simplest meats, in the most natural drinks, than the intemperate and by intemperance enervated, have in all the delicacies and provocatives of gluttony and luxury! And how completely, how blithely does the former enjoy the innocent pleasure it offers him! He has no need to go far to seek it, nor laboriously and artificially to prepare it, nor previously to devise means for sharpening his palled appetite and render himself susceptible of pleasure. Nature presents it to him, nature prepares it for him, his appetite seasons it, and what is really excellent in it retains for him undiminished charms. He enjoys it in the entire consciousness of himself, in calm repose, without reproach, and how greatly must all this enhance to him the enjoyment of it!

Moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure procures us yet further advantages, my pious hearers. Our mind thereby preserves its freedom, its activity, its alacrity, and we are fit and willing for any business of our station and calling. This is at least undeniable, that we are not merely animal creatures, that we possess privileges, considerable privileges above the beasts of the field, and that we degrade ourselves to that inferior class of beings, if like them we only pamper the body, and gratify our animal appetites and instincts.

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No; we are designed to think, to think rationally, to employ our mental capacities and powers, to use them with ease and security; to govern ourselves, and occasionally to sacrifice our pleasure and our profit to the greater benefit of our brother; we are designed to lead an active, laborious life, to be industrious for the public good, and thus to capacitate ourselves for greater affairs and a superior state. But how shall we be able to effect this purpose if we give up ourselves to intemperance in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure? How sluggish and languid would our mind be to all that is generous and great, but which demands labour and exertion! How troublesome to it continued reflection on whatever is grave and important! How little inclination and inducement should we frequently have to the most generally useful occupations and labours of the present life! How soon should we grow weary of them, and how readily abandon them on every pretext! And if however we were forced to submit to them by outward circumstances, what an oppressive burden should we find that which ought to be our pleasure and delight! So many aberrations and troubles all totally unknown to the man accustomed to moderation. His mind never languishes beneath the load of his body, he controuls his appetites, he is easy and alert, he is conscious of his powers, feels himself bound to employ them to the best, the most generally useful purposes, and

and in so doing finds his greatest, his noblest satisfaction.

Yes, moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure exalts and dignifies it. It in a manner spiritualizes it; by divesting it of the shameful and degrading that is connected with mere animal gratification; by teaching us to consider and use it as means subservient to higher ends; by rendering it more agreeable to our nobler nature and our really grand destination. Our mind is more at liberty to think and our heart is more susceptible of the finer feelings, than those of the entirely sensual man intoxicated with sensual lusts; we can raise ourselves in mind and heart to God, the original, eternal fount of pleasure and delight, and in all our agreeable and delightful sensations, recognize his paternal providence and rejoice in his bounty. Thus may we then associate spiritual and sensual pleasures and by the one give a value to the other, which of themselves they could never possess. All is then and becomes to us the gift of our gracious father in heaven, the effect and demonstration of his all-embracing and all-blessing love, and the earnest of still greater endowments and pleasures in the world to come. The habitudes and relations in which we stand in the present state to what is earthly and sensual, and whereby so many men suffer themselves to be chained as slaves to the ground, then prevent us not from rising superior to the terrestrial and

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visible and being always mindful of our heavenly origin and our grand destination. The temperate man, who is temperate on the principles of wisdom and christianity, apprehends and maintains his dignity even in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure, the dignity of a rational, immortal intelligence. Instead of degrading himself into a slave of his sensual appetites, unable to resist the blandishments of pleasure, sacrificing to it his reputation, his inward peace, his health and his life, he maintains the command of himself, sets the due bounds to his sensual appetites and instincts, never suffers himself blindly to be hurried away by them, never surfeits himself with their enjoyment, learns willingly to forego what most flatters his senses, and thus asserts his liberty, the noblest prerogative of the man and the christian.

Thus various, thus great are the benefits arising from moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure. Thus intimately are they associated with our real perfection and happiness. Thus certain it is, that even this virtue is its own reward, and to him who understands and practises it, is by no means a grievous burden. No, my dearest friends, if ye have any value for your health and your life; if ye wish to preserve the one and to prolong the other; if ye would always give your pleasures the charm of novelty, enjoy them completely and cheerfully and avoid all languor and disgust from them; if ye are jealous of the liberty, of the serenity

renity and activity of your rational mind, and desire to perform the functions of your station and calling with alacrity and delight, in a manner truly useful to yourself and others; if ye experience superior, nobler pleasures, and conformably to your destination strive more for them than for any other: let me recommend to you moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasure. . Keep rather on this side the bounds that are set you by reason and nature, than risk the infringement of them in the slightest degree. Never forget, that ye are rational, free, moral agents, created for immortality, and that no dominion is more tyrannical, that none lower degrades mankind and loads them with heavier chains, than the dominion of sensuality. More and more completely to rescue yourselves from it, to maintain the liberty of your mind, that true nobility of your nature, always freer from encroachment, and thereby to approximate intelligences of a superior order, let that be the object of your ambition, as well as your principal business. Indeed if your taste be already vitiated, and sensual lusts have already acquired some authority over you, you will at first find it troublesome to confine them within proper bounds and to resist their impetuous demands. You will often be obliged to do violence to yourselves, sometimes even to deny yourselves innocent gratifications and pleasures, and to keep a strict guard upon all your thoughts and desires as well as upon

the impressions of outward objects, if you would recover your liberty and gain the controul of yourselves and of all that is sensual. But what exertion, what conflict, what sacrifices are to be put in competition with the victory over ourselves and the defeat of sensuality! And how great the strength you will receive from the apprehension of God, the witness and judge of your conflict, and the thought of futurity, which reserves such palms for the conqueror both in this world and in that which is to come! Oh let these sentiments act in all their native force upon you, let them be ever present to your mind, and then according to the exhortation of an apostle be steadfast, immoveable, always increasing in wisdom and virtue, and be assured, that your labour will not be in vain.

SERMON XLIV.

*What true Honour is, and how we should behave
respecting Honour.*

GOD, thou hast vouchsafed us especial privileges as rational, moral creatures, and made us capable of still greater. It is thy gracious purpose that we should recognize them, be sensible to their worth, exult in them, and have a respect for ourselves and the dignity which thou hast conferred upon us. Whatever therefore of good and excellent that we perceive in each other we should regard with mutual complacency, and on its account esteem and honour one another. In mankind, thy creatures, thy children, we should admire and praise thee, the creator and father of them and of us; in the lineaments of thy image which we discern in them, we should revere and extol the traces of thy intelligence, of thy wisdom and loving-kindness. To eschew all that degrades and disgraces our nature; to do and to aim at all that ennobles and perfects it, and always to be growing into the likeness of thee, our heavenly father: is what should be the ultimate object of
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our ambition! Oh that we might never lose sight of it, and never grow faint and remiss in the pursuit of it! Oh might we never be deluded by false appearance and show, never be dazzled by outward distinctions, never seek our honour in things that have no real lasting value, never be proud of our preeminences whatever they may be, or misemploy them in foolish and generally-pernicious actions! God, do thou keep us from such an embasing and criminal conduct. Teach us to apprehend and to judge aright concerning what true honour is, and what conduces to it. Grant that we may seek it by no other than legitimate means, by wisdom and virtue, by real desert in behalf of our brethren; that we may always use it properly, always according to thy will and to the furtherance of thy designs, and thus give to the emulation with which thou hast inspired us all, its best direction and its proper pitch. Yes, to be that and to do that, which is acceptable and well-pleasing unto thee, our ruler and judge, be that our most zealous endeavour, our highest renown! Confirm us in these sentiments by the doctrines of truth that are now to be delivered to us, and let our reflections be sanctified by thy grace and heavenly benediction. These our supplications we present unto thee, humbly trusting in thy mercies as thy offspring and the votaries of Jesus; addressing thee further in his name and words: Our father, &c.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 8.

If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

LOW ambition and generous emulation are both in their nature and in their effects extremely different. Criminal and corrupt as is the former so innocent and useful is the latter. If the former create desolation and misery among mankind, the latter gives birth to many excellent and noble actions, and promotes human happiness in more than one respect. Nor does emulation simply considered militate either with the dictates of reason, or with the laws of religion and christianity. It is natural to every man that is not thoroughly depraved, and according to the wise intention of his creator is calculated to deter him from whatever is mean and disgraceful, and to incite him to what is honourable and praiseworthy. It is designed as a counterpoise to that self-love and that self-interest, which are so apt to gain the ascendant over him, and to teach him to undertake and to do much that is beautiful and good, much that is difficult and laborious, without regard to his personal profit or loss. And why should christianity condemn so natural and in its consequences so generally useful a propensity? Christianity, which is intended not to subvert, not to destroy, but to exalt and to refine our nature? No; the more it occasions us to recognize and to apprehend the dignity

dignity of our nature ; the more plainly it informs us of its grand destination : so much the more favourable it is to innocent emulation, and so much the nobler is the tone and direction it gives it. One of its worthiest teachers and greatest encouragers, Paul, therefore addresses christians in the words of our text : if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, diligently pursue these objects. Be indifferent towards nothing, omit and neglect nothing, that brings you real honour, that tends to your true glory, and through you to that of christianity. Since however emulation may very easily degenerate into ambition, and the one is frequently confounded with the other, it is the more necessary that we should endeavour to form just notions of real honour. And this is the design of my present discourse. Which, in order to accomplish, I shall do two things. First I will shew you, wherein true honour consists, and by what rules we should estimate and judge of its value ; and then how we are to behave towards or with respect to honour.

Honour, you know, is founded on the good opinion which others entertain of us, of our capacities and abilities, of our gifts and attainments, of our preeminences and merits, and consists in all that, whereby they express and display this good opinion either to ourselves or to others concerning us. It comprehends therefore not only
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the esteem that they have for us, but likewise the several marks and proofs of it which they discover to us and to others by words, by gestures, by judgments, by actions. That the esteem then which others entertain for us, that the tokens of respect they shew us, should have a real intrinsic value ; that they should be worth the desire and endeavours of a reasonable man, of a christian : it is by no means indifferent, whereon they are built, and how and from whom we receive them. The following five observations may tend to illustrate the matter.

The first is this : The honour which deserves that appellation and is worthy of our pursuit, must be founded on good qualities, on real excellencies or merits that actually belong to us. If any one ascribe to me good qualities, which I have not, excellencies, which I do not possess, merits, of which I am destitute ; if he therefore shew me esteem and respect, extols and praises me on account of these things : he disgraces, humiliates, affronts me, rather than truly honours me. Whether he do so from weakness, from ignorance, from prepossession, from excessive complaisance, or in compliance with the prevailing fashion, or whether it be from envy, from malice, from censoriousness ; the effect is always all to me the same : always more or less disagreeable, as reminding me of my, perhaps perfectly innocent and unavoidable, defects and infirmities ; and frequently injurious,

jurious, because by flattering my self-love it may lead me to form wrong notions of myself.

The second observation is this: True honour, honour to which even the wise man and the christian need not be indifferent, must be founded rather on such properties, skill, excellencies, merits, that I myself have acquired and procured, the fruits of my industry, of my probity, of my philanthropy, of my public spirited exertions and occupations, than on such as I owe entirely to fortune, to chance, to birth or even to the injustice of mankind. And in fact, my pious hearers, what else is it but weakness of intellect, or insignificant empty ceremony, or the effect of long derived habit and formality, when people purely on their account bow and cringe to me, when they grant me precedence in society, because I have inherited from my parents or progenitors wealth and affluence, or dignities, or rank and station, because I happen to bear a particular name, because I am styled great and noble, or because I fill an office, occupy a post, that confers upon me authority and respect! How galling are sometimes the marks of honour that are shewn to persons on such grounds, to those who pay them! How much real contempt, how much cold indifference is often concealed under these outward tokens of esteem! How mortifying must it be even to the reflecting and liberal minded man himself, when he feels that greater honour is paid to his titles,
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to his cloaths, to his dress, than to his person, more to his external than to his internal preeminence; or when he sees that others who really excell him in intrinsic worth and actual merit, are less esteemed and honoured than him, merely because fortune, who in the distribution of her favours so rarely pays deference to merit, has been less propitious to them! No; all honour that is not grounded on excellencies of the mind and heart, on intelligence and integrity, on wisdom and virtue, on personal desert, is only fancy and affectation, a childish bauble, at most a necessary, or unavoidable evil, and can never be the object of desire or endeavour to a truly wise and virtuous, therefore to a truly honourable man.

Third observation: In order that the honour shewn me should be of real value in my sight, should be an object worthy the desire of a thinking man: it must be founded on real esteem for my person, my excellencies, my merits. It must be shewn me willingly and not from compulsion. It must not be merely from custom, not in consequence of preconcerted forms in society, or general practice, not because it is the fashion, not from simple courtesy: no; it must proceed from the conviction that another has of my worth. He must perceive and feel, that in my character or in my conduct there is something that deserves honour, that I excel others in something good and praiseworthy. He must esteem and love me in
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his heart; otherwise the tokens he gives me of his esteem and affection are empty forms, unmeaning ceremonies. Every mark of honour therefore that is shewn me, because it cannot well be refused me on account of my station, my office, my relative positions to others and the privileges connected with them, or because people are obliged in many respects to observe what are called the rules of politeness, is not real, not covetable honour.

Fourth observation: The marks of esteem and honour from every one cannot alike redound to my real honour; they need not be the object of my emulation. True honour can only be shewn me by such persons as are capable of recognizing, of apprehending, of appretiating the worth of the good and excellent that they ascribe to me, and who themselves possess respectable qualities. Only the wise and upright know properly how to prize wisdom and probity. Only the man who has merit himself, can be the impartial and competent judge of human merit. As it redounds little to my real honour, that I am praised by the ignorant, the silly, the base, the vicious: so it certainly tends greatly to my honour when that is done by the intelligent, the sincere, the virtuous, who themselves are eminently entitled to deference and esteem. The former do it from motives of self-interest, or from vanity, or from a blind imitation of others: the latter from discernment and conviction. The former reverse their judgment

as easily, and contradict themselves as frequently as outward circumstances, as form and ostentation, as chance and caprice give the word: the latter adhere to sound principles, regulate their judgments upon them, and find that which they once deemed beautiful and good to be always so. How much more weight and value must the opinion and the judgment of these have, than those of the former! If therefore I be respected and honoured by a few wise and honest persons, who know me well and who think no less justly than impartially and liberally, how indifferent may and ought I to be to the judgment of the great multitude, who neither know me sufficiently nor understand how to calculate the worth of any man; how little desirable to me should be the applause and the reverence of the vulgar whether in the higher or the lower classes, which is obtained and forfeited with equal ease and without reason!

In a word, my pious hearers, honour to be worth our desires and endeavours should be shewn more by deeds than by words. What am I the better for all the applause that is showered down upon me, how am I benefited by all the panegyrics with which I am pestered, or spoilt, of what use to me are all the outward marks of honour, that are shewn me, if they procure me no real, effectual affection from others, if they have no further influence on my circumstances or on my happiness? No; he alone honours me in deed and in truth who actually

ally behaves towards me in a manner suited to the good opinion he entertains of me ; who is prompt to help and befriend me whenever he can ; readily assists me with his advice and his sagacity, whenever I want them ; never fails to admonish and caution me whenever there is occasion for it ; who not only commends me when I do well, but likewise blames and corrects me when I mistake and am wrong ; and by so doing is careful and vigilant that I maintain my honour, and remain thy and become constantly worthier of the of honest men.

On such principles, my pious hearers, should we learn to judge of the value of honour, and to discriminate between true and false, covetable and despicable honour. Whence you may infer, that the greater part of that which is termed and reckoned honour, is not deserving of that appellation and that judgment, that we very frequently, perhaps generally, run after a vain and empty shadow, and are satisfied with the semblance and the form of what we are in quest of. We should however more circumstantially inquire, in what manner we ought to behave respecting honour, what bounds we should set to our natural appetite of honour, by what means we should satisfy it, and how and to what ends we should use it. Six general rules will safely conduct us in this research.

Art thou then desirous of true honour, o man, wouldst thou acquire true honour ; never seek it

at the expense of others. Build not thy good name on the suspicion thou raisest against the good name of thy neighbour; found not thy reputation on the contempt thou bringest on others; derive not thy splendor from the obscurity or the shade which thou throwest over their deserts. The honour that is thus acquired, is unlawful property, is purloined honour, which sooner or later reverts to its legitimate owner, and punishes him who surreptitiously obtained it with shame and confusion. No; all that is beautiful and good can subsist together without injury or inconvenience. True merits do *not* detrude one another, do not obscure one another. The more merit thou hast, the more agreeable will it be to thee to acknowledge and to respect the merit of thy brother. Do justice therefore to every one; rejoice in all the good and excellent, that others have and do; depreciate and obscure it not; and scorn the vile ambition that so often allows itself, by imposture, by calumny, by slander, by artifice and cunning, to rise above others, and to shine in a garment, which it has violently ravished from another.

Wouldst thou farther, o thou who art in pursuit of virtue and praise, give the best turn to thy emulation, and satisfy thy thirst of honour in the surest and safest manner: strive not so much for honour, as for what brings honour. Shun whatever degrades and disgraces the man, whatever renders him displeasing and contemptible in the sight

sight of God and of his intelligent fellow creatures. Do all that is just and becoming, that is fair and honourable, that is pleasing to God and to the best of mankind, whatever procures utility and satisfaction to thy brethren. Fulfil the duties of thy station, of thy calling, of thy office, and fulfil them with fidelity and care; make the best, the most public-spirited use of thy capacities and powers, of thy talents and attainments; of all the intellectual or external advantages which thou possessest, and endeavour to effect as much good with them as thou canst. Be and become and afford to society all that thou art able to be and to become and to afford to it. And then be not anxiously concerned about the judgment that may be passed upon thee and thy conduct, about the marks of respect and of satisfaction, which may be given thee or not. If thou do that and nothing else than that which is honourable, and do it in an honourable, generous method; rather on account of the thing itself than for the sake of the opinions of mankind, rather in secrecy and silence than in a striking, ostentatious manner, it will not fail to bring thee real honour. She seeks them that seem to shun her, and avoids them who strive to gain her with restless vanity.

Art thou desirous thirdly to enjoy true honour, my christian friend, and to enjoy it in tranquillity; be and become the more modest, the greater the honour that is shewn thee. So will it be shewn thee

thee willingly and with pleasure. So will not envy and jealousy and malice annoy thee in the enjoyment of it. Almost everybody delights to humble the proud, to mortify the arrogant and vain. Modest and unassuming merit alone inspires general and permanent esteem. Wouldst thou secure it to thee; require and consider it not as something that is thy due, and which cannot without injustice be withheld; account not every omission, every intentional or accidental aspersion of it as a crime, or even as a flagrant offence, discover no displeasure, no dissatisfaction at it. Never boast on the other hand of the favourable judgments that are past upon thee, or of the excellencies that are attributed to thee, never display them in an injurious or insulting manner to thy companions; and if others observe and proclaim the good that thou hast and dost, do thou not forget thy weaknesses and imperfections, thy several defects and failings.

Let, fourthly, the honour thou hast acquired never betray thee into security or indolence. Honour is by no means a property that is acquired once for all, and the loss whereof we have no reason to apprehend when once we are in possession of it. No; the favourable opinion, that others entertain of us, must be supported; the privileges which they confer upon us must be maintained. Mankind will soon cease to honour thee, when thou ceasest to make thyself honourable. Thy

present, thy former merits, great as they may be, will soon be forgotten, unless thou seek to acquire new ones. Let not therefore the good that thou mayst at any time have done, the services thou hast rendered to society, the example thou hast given it, ever fatigue thee, or lull thee into an indolent inactive repose. Forget rather in this respect likewise, what is behind thee, and press forward to the things that are before thee, to whatever is good and generally useful, which thou art still able to do and to promote. Set not here any arbitrary, any narrower limits to thyself, than God sets thee by his providence, by thy situation and by the measure of thy abilities. The farther thou proceedest on the path of real honour, the easier and plainer will it become to thee, the more means and opportunities will present themselves to thee, for rendering thyself serviceable to thy brethren. But a total stop on this path is actual retrogression. Here what the apostle says in our text is applicable: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Beware, fifthly, my christian brother, of all misapplication of the honour which thou hast acquired, and endeavour constantly to make the best, the worthiest use of it. Use it not for ostentation and show; not for eclipsing, for oppressing, for insulting others, and for proudly exalting thyself above them; not for the carrying on of nefarious or pernicious projects and undertakings.

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No; employ it in the design of becoming more useful to others, of having more influence on the general welfare, of procuring greater energy and effect to thy good advice, to thy prudent example, to thy public-spirited exertions, and the more surely and completely surmounting their concomitant impediments and difficulties. Employ it in defending the innocent and the weak, in encouraging the indolent or the timid, in frustrating the artifices of the wicked, in bringing forward and rewarding concealed merit. Employ it as an inducement to be more attentive to thyself, to be the more watchful over all thy discourses and actions, and so much the less to allow thyself in anything that is not entirely right, not proper for imitation, as thy judgment and thy example operates the more efficaciously on others. Use thy honour to the purpose of rendering wisdom and virtue, religion and piety, the love of God and man, honourable in thy person, by thy temper and thy conduct, and in gaining them still greater influence and respect, still more adherents and votaries.

Wouldst thou, lastly, my friend, behave as a wise man and a christian respecting honour, require it not, allure it not, extort it not, purchase it not by mean compliances and degrading obsequiousness. Wait for it patiently, and expect it solely from real excellencies and substantial merits. Possess and enjoy it as though thou possessedst and enjoyedst it not. Rely not too much upon it,

and set not thy heart upon it. Deem it neither indispensable nor untarnishable. Rather prepare thy mind for various accidents, vicissitudes, losses and injuries with regard to it. Never consider and prize it as thy sovereign good, as thy whole or principal happiness, as thy ultimate object; but only as subordinate means for attaining a superior object, and for promoting more honourable views. Thus wilt thou give the best pitch and direction to thy emulation, thus wilt thou use it to the ends, for which thy creator implanted it in thy breast. Yes, whoever in this method and in such dispositions contends for praise, for honour, for immortality, may comfort himself with the prospect of everlasting life, of everlasting happiness, and hereafter expect greater, more substantial honours, the esteem of superior intelligences, and the approbation and loving-kindness of God himself.

SERMON XLV.

The Substance of Christianity.

GOD, how happy are we, and how vast the debt of gratitude we owe thee, our father and benefactor, for it, in being enlightened with the light of christianity! What momentous, consoling truths has this heavenly doctrine promulgated to us! Of what momentous, consoling truths has it certified us, which we otherwise could not have discovered! How much more easily, how much more securely and boldly can we now along the path of duty and virtue press forward to happiness, to permanent, everlasting felicity! Oh that we might more and more sedulously profit by this divine communication, and thereby become uniformly wiser and better and happier! That all the professors of christianity and among them we ourselves might esteem this largess of thy bounty, as what it really is, and employ it consistently with its design and with thy gracious purpose! Cause then this heavenly light more and more powerfully to operate
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among us, let it shine still brighter wherever it enlightens, still more efficaciously destroy the dominion of error and vice, and still farther disseminate truth, virtue, liberty, happiness among thy children upon earth. Let us experience the fulness of its efficacy to our improvement and salvation, and grant that we may never throw obstacles in the way of its influence on our hearts and lives. May its essential doctrines be always present, and all its precepts and commands be sacred and inviolable to us. Oh teach us to think and live entirely as behoves christians, that we may become capable and partakers of the entire christian happiness! Bless to this end the considerations thereupon which we are now about to engage in. Let them shew us christianity in its native simplicity and dignity, and let us thereby be penetrated with reverence and affection for it. For these benefits we implore thee in filial confidence as christians, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee, according to the promises of thy son Jesus, our lord and saviour, in whose holy name we conclude our petitions, saying: Our father, &c.

ROMANS i. 16.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

IF with our text we attribute to christianity a divine power to the amelioration and salvation of mankind, yet we understand by it not all that mankind have ever pretended it to be, or still pretend, not all the abstruse, ingenious, subtile, arbitrary statements and explications that have been made of it, but only that, which it has essentially inherent, what was designed for the instruction of all ages and all nations; and this we may find in the discourses of Jesus and the writings of his apostles without much trouble. We need only to separate from their representations, what related to the particular exigencies, to the mode of thought and apprehension peculiar to their contemporaries, who till then had been jews or heathens, and whose prepossessions and weaknesses could not be directly and at once reprobated and removed, but required to be handled with discretion. We need only to consider, that christianity was designed to be a light to mankind, the full blaze whereof they could not bear at once, but always shining brighter, always rising higher, it was still gradually to extend and clarify their horizon, and render them capable of a continually juster and completer apprehension of

of the truth. Now in the brighter effulgence of it, we ought not any longer to be children in understanding, no longer adhere to dark images, no longer to representations founded on the jewish and pagan way of thinking, which were gradually to be obliterated and made to give place to a more liberal and dignified interpretation. Bloodshedding, expiation, sacrifices, sanctuary, priesthood, atonement, ransom, purification, propitiation; all these and the like images and representations, which were so natural to the first confessors of Jesus and so closely interwoven with their whole system of thought, were not always to be the mediums through which christians should convey their corrected perceptions. They were only form and figure, but not the reality itself. The former never can nor should be of equal moment with us as the latter. This abstractedly from the other we should always understand with increasing perspicuity, if we would experience its proper efficacy.

Which then are the peculiar doctrines, that communicate to christianity this power to the salvation of its genuine confessors? To which doctrines must we principally attend, which make ourselves most acquainted with, and blend most intimately with our whole system of temper and behaviour, if we would thereby become wise and virtuous, contented and happy? What does christianity preach, what does it inculcate, command,

mand, promise, if we look less at the diction or expression of the doctrine, than at the doctrine itself; if we separate it from those topics which are peculiarly adapted to certain times, and solely calculated for certain persons, in particular idioms and modes of representation, and consider it as a divinely authenticated directory to happiness for all times and all people; if we would express the substance and essence of it in our own rather than in a foreign and unknown tongue? A few, but those extremely momentous and very comprehensive positions, comprise the whole substance of christianity. Let us hearken to its instruction, and bestow upon it all the attention, which a subject so highly interesting deserves.

There is, (thus christianity first addresses us,) there is but one God, only one eternal, infinite, supremely perfect spirit, the father of all spirits and of all flesh, the creator of heaven and earth, the God and father of our lord Jesus Christ. All the idols of the heathen are nothing, all their authority and dominion is vain; all the service and the worship that is paid them is for nought; all the fear and the hope, that surround their temples and altars, are the effects of superstition and imposture. There is none good, there is none perfect except the only God. Of him and through him and to him are all things; to him alone belong praise and glory for ever. Him do thou adore in spirit and in truth; him revere and love
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with undivided reverence and affection; to him devote thy entire obedience, thy complete submission, thy perfect confidence. Dost thou fulfil all his commands; thou hast fulfilled all thy duties. Art thou assured of his care, of his protection, of his good pleasure; nothing need disturb or alarm thee, thy safety and thy happiness are firmly established for ever. In him, the Highest, the Only, the Infinite, should all thy thoughts, sensations, desires, affections, exertions, views and expectations unite as lines in their proper centre. There thy mind and thy heart, thy thoughts and thy will, find that rest and that consistence, which everywhere else thou wouldst look for in vain. To him whatever thou feelest within and observest without invariably conducts thee. Him all nature proclaims and extols. By every one of his works, by all his constitutions and provisions, by all the ways which he calls thee and the other creatures to go, he, the Invisible, speaks to thee, and declares to thee his dispositions and his designs. Never in this respect has he left himself unwitnessed to mankind. But never has he more clearly and fully revealed himself to them, than by his son and representative Jesus. He, as the confidant of his decrees, as the expositor of his will, has brought us out of darkness into light, from doubt to certainty. He has brought the deity nearer to us and us to the deity, deprived the immense interval between

tween him and us of its deterring tendency, and opened to our understanding and our affections a free access to him, the Highest above all height. He is the express image of the Father, the refulgence of his glory. He that knows him knows the Father : he that so conceives of God, as Jesus has declared him to us, conceives of him as he will and can be conceived of by rational creatures, by mankind. Revere therefore this divine teacher and delegate, be docile to his instructions, through him draw nigh to the Father, so wilt thou honour him who sent him, and who, as he himself declares, is his God and thy God, his father and thy father.

Yes, this God, (christianity thus further addresses her pupils), this God is the father of mankind, in the loftiest signification of the word. From him they are derived, by him they subsist, in him they live and move and have their being. He loves them all, provides for all, conducts them all to perfection and happiness. He is no austere master, no inexorable judge, far above all human weaknesses and passions, above all that is called anger and revenge. He governs not for the sake of governing ; commands not for the sake of commanding ; punishes not for the sake of punishing : but does both the one and the other, in order to prosper and to bless. He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, extremely placable
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and beneficent, he is love itself. As a father he pities even his frail and guilty children, whenever they return to their duty and honour him with childlike dispositions. He requires neither gifts nor oblations, neither penances nor mortifications, neither satisfaction nor atonement; only hearty repentance and actual amendment does he require of them, and forgives, them that amend, iniquity, transgression and sins. Of this he has expressly assured them by Jesus, his son and representative; of this he has given them an extraordinary, irrefragable testimony, in causing this his beloved son to die upon the cross in confirmation of that consoling truth. Thus has he afforded even to the weakest of his children on earth a palpable proof of his paternal condescension and love, and presented them with a means of calming their minds, completely adapted to their wants and their habitual train of ideas. Let not therefore, says christianity to its professors, let not servile fear, let not slavish dread, deter thee from approaching the most gracious and affectionate being. Think not to honour thy father in heaven by trembling and shuddering before him as before an austere master, ever prompt to punish, and requiring more of his vassals, than they are able to perform. Misconceive of him not as a feeble mortal, easily offended, difficult to be appeased. Honour him rather with filial confidence, with faithful trust, and expect pure good and

and constantly the best from him, if thy heart bear thee witness, that thou sincerely lovest what is true and good, and accountest the approbation and good-pleasure of the Highest thy supreme felicity.

Acquiesce then, says christianity, thirdly, to her scholars, acquiesce entirely in his wise and benign providence, and resign thyself calmly to his guidance and direction. All things are open to his view, all are ordered and conducted by him. His providential care extends over the smallest equally with the greatest, over every part, as well as over the whole combination of thy fates and fortunes. He knows all thy wants, all thy concerns and troubles, and takes an interest in all. In his sight nothing is great and nothing small, nothing is hid from him and nothing doubtful to him; all is the work of his hands, all infallible means for attaining his sovereign purpose, the greatest possible perfection and happiness. All his ways are full of wisdom and benignity, all tend to thy benefit and to the benefit of the great, innumerable family of God in heaven and on earth. They are all righteous and holy, unblamable and unimprovable, though often veiled in obscurity and their issue impervious to thy shortsighted eyes. They comprehend all mankind and all worlds, every period of time and all ages of eternity. Little and insignificant as thou art in thyself and in comparison with the whole, yet
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needst thou not deem thyself forgotten, abandoned, or forlorn in the infinitude of things. Thy father in heaven, whose intelligence is unbounded and whose bounty is inexhaustible, beholds and knows and cares for even thee. Never will he, the Allwise and Allbountiful, forget or neglect thee; never suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able to bear; never lay burdens on thee, which thou canst not sustain; never require of thee, what is beyond thy ability to perform; never call thee to go ways, which will not lead thee to felicity. Let this thought be always present with thee, shedding light upon all the paths and events of thy life. It is calculated to give alacrity to thy mind and tranquillity to thy heart, and to teach thee contentment and obedience. Commit thyself boldly to the guidance of thy most wise and bountiful parent; revere all his ordinances and dispensations with filial submission, revere them as just and proper; and follow all his invitations and commands, every suggestion of his providence with promptitude and joy.

Dedicate thyself, says, fourthly, christianity to its confessors, dedicate thyself entirely to integrity and virtue, thy thinking as well as thy acting faculties, thy heart as well as thy life, in the secret chambers of thy house as well as in the sight of the world, in thy ordinary affairs as in the offices of divine worship, in the blithe circle

circle of thy companions as in the silence of solitude. Revere, love, chuse, do at all times and in all places, what is just and right and fit ; what is agreeable to the will of thy father in heaven and advances the welfare of his children on earth. Let no base passion get possession of thy heart, no vice enslave thee ; avoid sin more than any misfortune, and combat every frailty as an impediment to thy perfection. Let every duty be sacred to thee : and every just, equitable, beneficent act a duty. To do the will of God, to think and live conformably to his designs, to cleanse and sanctify thyself more and more both in body and in soul, worthily to fill thy station in the empire of God, to be not only innoxious, but still more useful to thy brethren, and thus to qualify thyself for higher perfections : these should be the objects of thy unremitting endeavours, of thy supreme delight. Virtue, genuine, undissembled, ever active virtue, should distinguish thee from all that are not christians, and reflect glory on the doctrine which thou confessest, both amongst them that believe and them that believe not. Virtue alone has the power to render thee both in the present and in the future world alert and cheerful, contented and happy ; it is the only safe road, that conducts to the possession and enjoyment of those properties, the only method of securing the good pleasure of thy creator and governour, and of having fellowship with

with him, who dwells in light and is himself pure light. Nothing can compensate the defect of it, nothing supply its place, nothing can exempt thee from the exercise of it, neither knowledge nor faith, neither rites nor ceremonies. It is worthy of thy entire affection, of thy unabated pursuit. For her thou canst never venture and sacrifice, never endure and do too much. In her service thou canst never suffer any real loss, on her paths thou canst never go astray; and though thy course on them may at times be toilsome, though thou reach not the goal without stumbling and falling, yet is even thy defective and imperfect virtue well-pleasing to God, who has called thee to it by Jesus, and will be rewarded by him, if it be but sincere. He looks at the heart, and integrity is agreeable to him. He demands not faultlessness, but honesty and sincerity of his children.

Let, in this respect, says, fifthly, christianity to its confessors, let love, the love of God and man, entirely replenish thy heart, let it be the life and the soul of thy virtue. Love thy father in heaven with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength, and love thy neighbour as sincerely as thyself. This is the summary of the whole law, the very abridgment and compend of all that is morally beautiful and good. This is genuine, christian virtue, ennobling all the good that thou conceivest

ceivest and dost; which alone heightens its value in the sight both of God and man, and renders every duty easy and pleasant to thee. Learn therefore to rejoice in God, as thy father, and in mankind, as thy brethren; contemplate all the beautiful and good, that thou perceivest in the world and among mankind; with participation and delight; enjoy every instance of God's bounty with cheerful gratitude; revere his commands with willing obedience; and afford thy brethren all the relief, that thou canst afford them, with promptitude and pleasure. Thus will order and harmony reign within thee and without thee; thus will thy virtue be not an empty name, not a false appearance, but reality and truth. — Such was the virtue of Jesus, thy leader and forerunner, and his virtue should be the model of thine. To imitate him, to become constantly more like and conformable to him, is the whole duty, is the distinctive characteristic of his genuine votaries. Boast not of being his confessor and adherent, trust not to his benefits and blessings, unless thou tread in his footsteps, and follow him. Be therefore likeminded with him; walk, as he walked. Be humble, gentle, forgiving, patient and resolute, beneficent and industrious for the general welfare, like him. Obey thy heavenly father, and serve thy brethren on earth, as willingly, as cheerfully, as indefatigably, as he did. Have

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regard like him in all things to God and to futurity, and be ready like him, to sacrifice all to virtue and to human happiness. Seek the whole of thy glory, thy supreme felicity, in thy increasing resemblance to him. The imitation of him is the directest, the surest way to become truly virtuous and ever farther to advance in virtue. On that way thou wilt never go wrong, never be doubtful and irresolute. Thus wilt thou supply his place among his brethren and prosecute his great work on earth. Thou wilt like him endeavour by all means to promote truth, virtue, liberty, happiness, and like him experience the sublimest pleasure in it. And if thou resolutely pursue that way, it will have the same glorious issue for thee, which it had for him.

Yes, says lastly christianity to its confessors, confine not thy exertions, thy hopes, thy expectations, to this short, this transitory terrestrial life. Look rather to the invisible than to the visible, rather at that which is eternal, than at that which is temporal. Thy spirit will not die at the same time with thy body; no man, no creature can kill it, and its creator has designed it for continued existence, for immortality, for always ascending perfection. He has impressed it with his image, made it capable of knowing him, of loving him, of having fellowship with him, and thus given it an infallible pledge of its

its future destination. Here his design is to educate it for a higher, a better life. Here thou livest in a state of discipline and exercise: afterwards awaits thee a state of retribution. Here is the time of sowing: there the time of reaping. Hereafter will all, even what is now concealed, be brought to light, and everyone be rewarded according to his works. Then wilt thou receive, accordingly as thou hast acted here, whether well or ill. Then will honour or shame, reward or punishment alight upon thee, according as thou hast here faithfully employed, or misemployed, thy capacities and abilities, and the means which God has given thee. By his gospel has Jesus brought life and immortality to light; by his death and by his resurrection from the dead has he placed these hopes and expectations beyond all doubt. As certainly as he lives, so surely shall thy spirit never cease to live; as certainly as he enjoys the meed of his inviolable rectitude and fidelity, so surely mayst thou, who resolutely followest him as thy model, comfort thyself with sharing in his glory and felicity. To him are gathered all his faithful votaries and adherents, all the children of God, all eminently good persons, howsoever dispersed over the face of the earth; and with him shall they all proceed from one stage of perfection and happiness to another. These are the prospects, that christianity opens to thee, these

the energies of the future world, which will never allow thee to be deficient in courage and alacrity, and will assist thy virtue and piety to triumph over all things. Expand thy heart to their influence, let them be continually present to thy mind, blend them with all that thou thinkest and dost, think and live already here as an heir of immortality: so will christianity assuredly be and yield to thee, what it is designed to be and to yield to mankind; it will render thee both in the present and the future world wise and good, contented and happy.

These, my pious hearers, these are the essential doctrines of christianity. This is the spirit, which, as in its founder, lives and operates throughout it, and by which it is a divine power, conferring beatitude on all them that believe it. Let us adhere to these doctrines, whereon is stamped the seal of truth and divinity in all respects, and which can only be doubtful and suspicious to us, if we disfigure them by human commixtures and appendages, or obscure them by arbitrary definitions and interpretations. Let us judge and apply these doctrines, not as children, but as men; as christians, who in light and knowledge exceed the first disciples of our lord and his apostles, prepossessed as they were with so many prejudices and errors, and who are become more capable of discerning many truths in their natural form without figures and alle-

allegories. But let us daily more intimately blend these doctrines with our whole system of thought and apprehension, make ourselves more and more conversant and familiar with them, always more assiduously apply them to our particular occasions and study to be thorough christians in our lives and conversations. So shall we infallibly always more and more experience the divine power of this doctrine to our improvement and pacification, and everlastingly rejoice, that God has called us to christianity. Amen.

SERMON XLVI.

Whence it arises that Christianity operates not more efficaciously among its Professors.

GOD, thou hast called us to christianity, and in it hast given us a very powerful means to virtue and to happiness. To what lengths might we proceed in the practice of the former and in the enjoyment of the latter; how much good might we do and enjoy, if christianity were and yielded to us, what it is designed and adapted to be and to yield to us! Yes, we alone are to blame, if we experience not its power, or experience it only in an inferior degree. We consider and apply it not agreeably to its destination. We content ourselves but too often with a barren knowledge of it, with a blind, dead faith, with outward piety and devotion. Our heart takes not sufficient interest in it, we confine it to particular times and places, and separate it from the rest, from the greatest part of our lives. Oh teach us to perceive this truth, with conviction to perceive it, and by that perception to be awakened to a salutary sense of shame and

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to a better, a more faithful use and application of christianity! Might we however henceforth do our utmost to obviate whatever diminishes or impedes its efficacy in us, and open all the avenues of our heart to its improving and saving influence! Might we always more perspicuously and rightly apprehend this heavenly doctrine, more firmly believe it, always more cordially revere and love it, always more sedulously use and apply it! Might even the considerations in which we are about to engage, contribute somewhat to that end! Accompany them in this respect with thy blessing, o Father of mercies! Let us perceive and feel the truth and importance of what is now to be delivered to us, and impartially apply it to our own situation. These our supplications we present unto thee with filial boldness as the votaries of thy son Jesus, and address thee further, trusting in his promises, as he vouchsafed to teach us. Our father, &c.

ROM. i. 16.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

THAT the gospel, or the christian doctrine, as our text informs us, is a divine power to the salvation of mankind, to improve them in an eminent degree, to pacify their minds, and to lead them by an easy and safe road to happiness: is what no
unbiassed

unbiassed person will deny, who properly understands the subject, apprehends the design of this doctrine, and what spirit lives and stirs therein. All that it enjoins us to believe and to do ; all that it allows us to hope and to expect on the part of God ; all the sentiments with which it inspires us ; all the rules of conduct that it prescribes us : how adapted, how powerful to impart inclination and courage, energy and strength for controuling the passions, for fulfilling every duty, for leading a virtuous and holy life, and for rendering the man easy, contented and happy who adopts and follows them, and opens his heart to their influence ! Accordingly, this divine doctrine in the primitive ages of christianity was productive of no less various and extensive than salutary effects, among its professors. Even though these effects were neither so general nor so great as they are sometimes represented ; were even many, were even most of the professors of christianity not so pure and holy, not such shining patterns of virtue, as we are at times inclined to believe : it cannot however be denied, that thousands and thousands of persons have by this doctrine attained to a more eminent degree of wisdom, of virtue, of happiness, than they would have reached without it. Certainly no other doctrine has ever produced so much new intellectual life, so high a sense of the human dignity, so much inclination and energy to goodness, so many generous, noble sentiments

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and actions, among mankind, and had so powerful an influence on their whole cast of thought and their moral conduct, as this. The first apologists for it might therefore confidently appeal to this its efficacy as a matter that was thoroughly known both to friends and foes, to jews and heathens, and must have redounded to the glory of christianity, and recommended it to all impartial votaries of truth and goodness. In proportion however as the multitudes of its professors increased, and the severer trials, through which they were previously obliged to pass, gave way to outward formality and the love of ease ; as christianity in profession became the religion of the great and powerful of the earth, and contrary to its design partook in their authority and dominion : its internal and divine power, its power to improve and to bless, was weakened and contracted in various ways ; and though it never entirely ceased to operate, yet it did so to a far less extent and in a far less conspicuous and remarkable manner than before. Even at present, my christian hearers, christianity does not effect all the good, does not effect so much among its professors, as it might and ought to do. Indeed this cannot be made a reproach to it. It still notwithstanding continues to be, what it originally was, a power of God unto salvation to all those who believe in it, a powerful means vouchsafed us by God to the attainment of superior felicity. Still certainly a
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considerable part of its professors experience this its peculiar efficacy and feel themselves strengthened and consoled by it ; and we all may make this blessed experiment, if we use it agreeably to its nature and the views of its author. In order to promote this design, we will now proceed to consider the causes why christianity produces not more and better effects among its professors. In discovering and clearly pointing out these causes ; we shall at the same time learn, what on the one hand we are to do and on the other what we are to avoid, if we would experience its power to our improvement and salvation.

Many nominal christians are unacquainted with christianity ; others form wrong and false conceptions of it ; numbers believe it not ; and others again apply it not or make a very erroneous application of it. Consequently ignorance, error, unbelief, doubt, and non-application or mis-application of christianity, are the primary causes, why it produces not more and better fruits amongst its professors.

Many nominal christians, I say, are not acquainted with christianity. They bear a name, the true signification whereof they do not comprehend. They confess a doctrine, the tenor and scope whereof are unknown to them. They profess to be scholars of a teacher, to be subjects of a lord, about whose laws and lessons they have never given themselves any concern. Birth, educa-

education, accident, external interests have made them christians, and retain them in the profession of christianity. But how can that, which they understand not, operate upon them? How can the light, against which we shut our eyes, enlighten and conduct us? No; christianity does not work like a charm, which, without our knowledge, without our co-operation, against our consent acts upon us. It consists not in external rites, to the senseless, mechanical, cold observance whereof any peculiar efficacy is attached. No; the truth must be understood, felt, frequently and earnestly considered, diligently applied, in order to improve and console us. And what numbers of these ignorant christians are to be found among all ranks and classes! Do not many content themselves, do not perhaps the majority content themselves with the generally bad, and always inadequate instruction, which is given them in their childhood, or in their early youth concerning christianity? And with many how quickly afterwards are the faint impressions they then received effaced by the occupations and pleasures of life! How few afterwards bestow due pains in methodizing and digesting, in rectifying, in extending the knowledge they have acquired, in consolidating the first imbibed and still fluctuating arguments, and erecting thereon an edifice, that may afford them safety and protection! Indeed in an age that boasts of being eminently

nently enlightened, ignorance respecting the most important objects, ought not to be supposed. But is this boast of our times well-founded? Is it so to that extent and in that degree, as we so frequently and fondly imagine? If illumination relate not to words but to things; if we are to understand by it not superficial, but substantial knowledge and perceptions; if it should appear not in an utter indifference or a supercilious contempt for what is known and unknown, for what is true and what is false, but in calm investigation, and mature examination of both; if it consist in a better direction and a more assiduous application of our intellectual faculties; if it teach us to think on all things and to judge of all things, more attentively, more seriously, more liberally, more impartially: then few, I fear, have any right to boast of it, and that even there, where it does exist, it much rather relates to other sciences than strictly to religious knowledge.

Great as this ignorance among many christians is: not less various are the erroneous and false notions, that many others form of christianity, and whereby the efficacy of it is diminished and impeded with them. If one conceives of christianity as a system of metaphysical subtilties, as a complex scheme of abstruse, mysterious, incomprehensible dogmas, the bare adoption and tenacious affirmation whereof gives a man great advantage over such of his fellow-creatures as are
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not christians and a peculiar merit in the sight of God; another represents it as an easy means of acquiring by certain rites and ceremonies, by exercises of devotion and offices of worship, the favour of his creator and judge, and of continuing addicted to sin and to vice with impunity. If that man rests in a dead faith without any works of virtue and righteousness and ascribes the more value to that faith, the less it is founded on inquiry, and the more harshly he censures every one who thinks and believes differently: this other contents himself with a conduct free from gross enormities, and thinks he has satisfied the demands of christianity, if he be not a robber, a murderer, an adulterer, a villain. And generally speaking, how great is the number of christians, who consider and respect christianity only as an intricate theory of articles of faith, but not as a practical directory to virtue and righteousness, who indeed search it for propitiation, atonement, pardon, reconciliation, but not for correction and amendment, not for light and energy to the accomplishment of their duties, who employ solely their mind, but not their heart in it, and separate the confession of the lips entirely from the confession of the life! What effects, what fruits can such conceptions of christianity produce among mankind? How can its divine power there be displayed? Indeed error also operates; but it operates nothing good. Its fruits are other,

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still grosser errors, vain imaginations and illusions, false security, foolish attempts to pacify the mind in the commission of sin and iniquity, groundless, deceitful hopes, and a further declension from the paths of truth and virtue. No, my pious hearers, he that makes not christianity the most important concern of his heart, and the rule of his life; he who considers it not entirely as a practical doctrine, tending in all its parts to the dignification of mankind, to the moral improvement of their dispositions and actions; he who does not submit to be entirely actuated and governed by its spirit, by the genius of its founder; he who does not combine faith with action, and ascertain the whole value of the former by the latter: cannot experience its power to the salvation of mankind; let him be never so staunch an assertor of the christian name, let him never so unfeignedly believe its doctrines and never so assiduously observe its rites, without becoming at all the better and happier for it.

Unbelief, my pious hearers, is a third cause, which impedes and totally enervates christianity in its efficacy with great numbers of its professors. Truth can only so far act upon us as we recognize it as truth and as such accept and believe it upon conviction. The firmer and freer from doubt that conviction is, the stronger and more irresistible is its efficacy. In this sense faith can remove mountains, vanquish the greatest difficulties,

ties, and perform things that seem to surpass the human faculties. In this sense the gospel is to him, who honours it with a firm belief, a truly divine, an all-conquering power, by which he overcomes both the world and himself, and makes every burden light, every duty a pleasure. What was it that rendered the first disciples and confessors of our lord so intrepid in all dangers, so bold and cheerful in sufferings and in death? It was the certain, undoubted assurance, that he as their head was alive, and that they as his members should live for ever with him. And what is it else but this faith, that even now gives christians the courage and the ability, to resist the temptations of sin, to despise the allurements of vice, and rather to pass their days in poverty and abjection, than to acquire authority and wealth by the violation of their innocence and integrity? But how rare is this faith among christians! What is the faith of the generality, but the fruit of education and prepossession, a blind servile repetition of what they have heard others affirm to be true, a consequent adoption of particular tenets without previous examination and trial, the reasons and analogy whereof they do not perceive, and which they would without hesitation exchange for others, if they had any outward motives for so doing? How easily may such a belief give way to unbelief! And how often does it really happen! A building that has no solid
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foundation, needs not a vehement storm to overthrow it ; any the least unusual shock must occasion its downfall. He who enters the lists without arms, will probably be the victim of the first antagonist. A case which but too many professors of christianity may well apply to themselves. One while it is the insatiable cravings of their appetites and passions, that set them against it ; at another it is the jeers and ridicule of its opponents, that confuse them ; now it is a plausible objection, that beguiles them ; then a mean fondness for imitation and a vain desire of being distinguished from others ; now the lamentable necessity of staving off reflection, of obtusing the inward sense and hardening the heart against the suggestions of reason and conscience, which renders what they called their faith suspicious and troublesome to them, and carries them over to infidelity. But how can christianity exert its efficacy, where unbelief, or blind, unfounded credulity prevails ?

Not much more can it, fourthly, operate there, where a man is perpetually driven to and fro by doubts and misgivings, and is either in a state of perpetual vacillation, or of supineness respecting truth and error. At least, the beneficial effects, which it may occasionally produce in him, cannot be durable ; they cannot give rise to any firm principles, any uniform dispositions, any steady and consistent course of action. As long as he

is wavering between truth and error, between belief and unbelief, so long as he is like a man, one moment striking into this path, and the next into that which runs opposite, enters neither with confidence, proceeds long together on neither, and therefore misses his mark, or reaches it not till late and quite spent with fatigue. Reason indeed tells us, in cases of doubt concerning matters of moment to chuse the safest course, and to act regarding such matters, as though we were perfectly sure of them. It therefore blames and condemns the christian, who because of certain doubts and difficulties, refuses to listen to the dictates of christianity, and to cultivate the christian temper and conduct. It informs him, that he will never lose anything by it, but at all events will be infinitely the gainer. Yet how many people, how many christians are there who give their reason an attentive, a patient hearing? How soon is its voice with many drowned in the clamour of their lusts and passions! And how greatly do these find their account, in encouraging every doubt against christianity in the heart of the unreformed man! — Indeed even persons of better dispositions, persons who truly revere christianity and its author, are not seldom disquieted by doubts, but with them too the energy of this divine doctrine is weakened, though in an inferior degree. And this may probably be the case with some professors of christianity in our

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days. The more the spirit of private investigation and interpretation is diffused abroad ; the more disgraceful superstition and implicit belief become ; the more prejudices and errors of every kind are detected and exposed ; the more generally the sentiment of liberty and the abhorrence of all constraint and servility gain ground : doubt will be more apt to arise in minds addicted to thought and inquiry, but not sufficiently informed and not sufficiently trained to habits of reflection. The conflict between light and darkness, between belief and unbelief, between truth and error, that perhaps distinguishes our times from all others, will most assuredly under the guidance and controul of sovereign wisdom and goodness sooner or later have for its consequences human perfection and happiness. But he alone can escape captiousness and scepticism, its proximate and noxious effects, who neither suffers himself to be blindfolded by pride and vanity, nor to be carried away by the prevailing fashion, but is continually vigilant over himself, who regularly acts upon sound principles, the maxims of wisdom and prudence, and willingly and faithfully follows that portion of light and knowledge which he possesses, how small soever it be.

In short, my pious hearers, what chiefly prevents christianity from demonstrating its whole force among its professors, is the not using, or
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the defective use and application of it. As the food which I do not take, or the effects of which I counteract, cannot strengthen or refresh me : so neither can the truth improve and bless me, which I do not apply to myself, or of which I make a wrong application. And to what with many professors of christianity is the total use of it confined ? To particular days of the year, to certain hours or moments of the day, in which they observe a few solemn rites, frequent the public worship with their brethren, repeat certain forms of prayer and devotion, or at most give some scope to a few thoughts on christian doctrines. Those days, those hours, those moments being past, christianity with all its precepts and doctrines is a foreign, an indifferent affair ; an affair, which has no concern with their usual, their ordinary life, with their wordly avocations and pleasures ; a preceptor and monitor, from whom we are to escape as soon as possible, and whom we only keep about us so long as with any regard to decorum we cannot avoid it. What effects however can truths, which we so soon lose sight of, which are commonly so unwelcome and tiresome to us, which during long intervals are foreign from us ; what effects can desultory truths, which lie in our memory in broken fragments, as it were abruptly detached and separate, which depend on nothing and are connected with nothing, have upon us ? How

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easily.

easily may they in this case be obscured, weakened, extruded by every other idea and sensation! Only the truths, my dear friends, that are strictly blended with the whole stock of our ideas and feelings, and in a thousand different ways interwoven with it, only these can evince their plenary efficacy upon us. For only these do we readily and impressively recollect on every occasion, only these spontaneously present themselves to our mind, whenever we are in want of their assistance. — And what a defective, either superstitious or extremely partial use and application do many other christians make of christianity! One while ascribing to certain sacred words and rites belonging to it, energies and effects, which they have not and cannot have, and attaching themselves entirely to collateral objects, to the derogation and neglect of what is important and essential. Thus, very often a prayer, a hymn, a devout celebration of the holy supper, is to efface the guilt of their sins, and be substituted for a virtuous and pious life. Sometimes they restrict the use of christianity entirely to its lenitives and emollients, for the afflicted and desponding; forgetting that the gospel has its corrosives also, for the hard and obstinate. They appropriate to themselves its promises, rely upon the infinite merits of the redeemer in behalf of the human race, comfort themselves with his propitiatory death, and his intercession with the father, with-

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out rendering themselves susceptible of those promises and these consolations by a truly christian temper and a truly christian life. Should not christianity however be somewhat very different from what it is, in order to improve and to save persons who so use or rather so abuse it?

Need we henceforward be surprised, my pious hearers, that christianity operates not more efficaciously among its professors? Or can we with any face of reason impute this want of efficacy as a reproach to it? Is it not absolutely our own fault if it manifest its divine power in us but feebly or not at all? And does it effectuate even amongst us, who are likewise professors of christianity, that which it might and ought to effectuate? Are we become by it so intelligent and judicious, so good and virtuous, so contented and happy, as it is designed and adapted to render us? And if we be not, what are the causes that have diminished and impeded its efficacy with us? To which of the forementioned classes of spurious confessors of christianity do we belong? To one or other of them we must belong, if this divine doctrine have no remarkable, no conspicuous influence on our tempers and on our conduct. Is it then ignorance, is it erroneous and false notions, is it unbelief, is it scepticism, is it the negligent or perverse use of christianity, by which it is rendered impotent or less efficacious

cacious with regard to us? Oh let us more patiently reflect upon it in silence and retirement, than we can do at present; and when we have detected the cause of our deficiency, let it be our most serious concern effectually to remove it, and to be and to become indeed and in truth, what christians should be and become!

SERMON XLVII.

*Whether or not Christianity be favourable to
Patriotism.*

GOD, who art the creator and father of us all, and lovest us all as thy creatures and children, thou hast caused us all to proceed from one blood, made us all dependent on each other, and linked us together by as close and various ties of exigencies and satisfactions, as persons belonging to one family can be connected together. But errors and sordid passions had separated us far asunder, made us of friends and brethren adversaries and enemies, and thus brought upon us inexhaustible misery. Then sentest thou, most merciful God, by thy son Jesus, the christian doctrine from heaven, that doctrine of concord and peace, that doctrine of love and felicity, which was calculated to recover us, to reconcile us, to connect us, to unite us together. And how happy should we be, if we all submitted to be animated and governed by its spirit, regulated ourselves entirely and in all respects by its precepts ! How greatly

greatly should we alleviate and sweeten our life, — how much more speedily and successfully attain to our greatest possible perfection ! And with what complacency couldst thou then look down upon the whole of thy great family on earth and rejoice with paternal delight in thy children ! Ah cause then the spirit and the efficacy of christianity to be diffused continually more and more among us and all mankind, and to be productive of more virtue and felicity amongst us ! Grant that even the present discourse on the christian doctrine may contribute much to that end, and hearken to our prayer through Jesus Christ, in whose name we further call upon thee, saying : Our father, &c.

2 PET. i. 7.

Add — to brotherly kindness charity.

CHRISTIANITY, and particularly the christian morality, has often been reproached with being unfavourable to patriotism or the love of our country. Nowhere is this attachment expressly recommended to us by Jesus and his apostles ; nowhere do they say to their scholars : Prefer the country, the place of thy nativity, to every other place and country, devote thyself and all thy perceptions and faculties exclusively to its service, venture all that is dear to thee, hazard even thy life for the interest of the nation to which thou belongest, for the prosperity of the society which
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has afforded thee protection, nourishment and education ; nowhere do they encourage their scholars to such ardent, unwearied exertion, as declines neither peril nor privation, for promoting the honour, the glory, the consequence, the wealth, the preponderance of their native country ; an exertion which is elsewhere reckoned among the noblest of human sentiments and actions. The more frequently however do they exhort us to universal charity, the more earnestly and emphatically do they urge us to the most active and magnanimous demonstrations of it. They have no intention farther to divide and separate man from man, already too widely sundered by selfishness, passion, and prejudice, to contract the limits of their friendship and affection, but incessantly labour to draw them closer together, to make them more acquainted, more conversant with one another, more benevolent and beneficent towards each other. That was the scope and design, the business of Jesus and his apostles. Hither, as to a common centre, tend all their doctrines and precepts. Add, it is accordingly said in our text, to brotherly kindness, to the kindness, which one christian owes to another, that universal charity, which extends over all nations and all mankind. And now ought this to be set down to the honour or to the disgrace of christianity ? Let us enter somewhat more circumstantially into the subject, my pious hearers.

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It merits our attention as being fertile in useful lessons.

To me, my pious hearers, it is a mark and proof of the high, the divine origin of christianity, that it does not favour what is vulgarly called patriotism, but is in opposition to it; that it aims not at the separation but at the strict association of mankind, not at contracting but enlarging their notions, not at checking but at promoting their liberty and perfection; that it provides not for one nation but for all nations, not for one sort but for all sorts of people; that it founds their happiness not on outward prosperity but on virtue and intrinsic worth, and not on political but on moral improvements: and unless it did so, it could not come from God, the father of all mankind, the fountain of universal love, the bounty whence dominion springs. The terrestrial legislator who prescribes laws for only one people, the human teacher, whose activity is confined within a narrow sphere and directed only to a limited purpose, may be allowed to preach to their people and to their scholars the love of their country, and to represent it as the main pillar of the state, as a primary virtue. But the lawgiver, the instructor, the reformer and the restorer of the whole human race, must propose to himself a superior and prosecute a sublimer purpose, teach loftier sentiments, and inculcate a purer and farther operative virtue; he must distribute light and comfort
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and felicity with impartial hands among mankind. And this is the character — this the glory of christianity.

Far be it from me, my pious hearers, to reject all patriotism, all love of our country ! What is more natural, what more conducive to the preservation of domestic, civil, human society, than our predilection for the place, the country, the persons, where and among whom we came into existence, where and among whom we obtained the first assistance, the first and most numerous offices of tenderness, enjoyed the first, most innoxious pleasures ; where our mind and our heart received their first formation ; where we learnt to think, to live, to love, to rejoice ; where we for the first time beheld the beauties of nature, for the first time inhaled the vital breath, the balmy odours of the spring, for the first time admired the splendor of the rising and the setting sun ; and delighted in this river, in that forest, this mountain, that dale, those trees, that rippling brook ; where so many objects and sports recall to our minds so many hours of congenial bliss, the fond recollections how blithe and gay we were there, and even in manhood enable us to enjoy a second time the pleasures of our earlier days, and in our imagination revive the scenes of harmless mirth that enlivened the spring of our existence ; where finally we brought the first offerings to friendship and to love, and where we are now connected

nected by numerous tender ties with so many people who have more or less contributed to our pleasure and prosperity : what is more natural, I say, than that we should feel a predilection for that place, that country, and those persons, that we should behold them with superior complacency, and that they should be the primary objects of our good wishes ?

What is again more natural, what more necessary to the preservation of social life, and what more useful, than that we should endeavour to improve with particular care, to use, to refine, to multiply and to enhance the worth of those gifts of nature that are scattered nearest around us, which we best understand, which we can have and increase most easily, most abundantly, that we should the most assiduously work them up, turn them to profit, improve, and procure the greatest demand for them ? That we should, as far as lies within the verge and compass of our abilities, exert ourselves to support, to extend, to promote those arts and professions, those manufactures, that species of trade and commerce, that are carried on amongst us, and which either our soil, our situation, our connections with others, or fortunate incidents, eminently invite us to carry on ? What is more natural than that we should apply our talents with peculiar energy where we can be most active, most immediately effect more good than anywhere else, give the best

best advice and assistance to others and to more of them, and more effectually serve them? That the welfare of those that are near us should be dearer to us than that of persons more remote; that we should take a livelier interest in the prosperity of our acquaintance, whom we have continually before our eyes, whose wants and circumstances are more particularly known to us, with whom we daily converse, and whose welfare so strongly and so quickly reacts upon our own, than in the welfare of persons' unknown to us, with whose state and condition we are not so minutely acquainted and on whom we can only act by the intervention of others? What is more natural than that on the spot where our children and grandchildren, our friends and companions will live long after we are gone, we should effect and produce much merely for their benefit and not for our own, that we should there sow and plant much, that will yield fruit to them, though we are to reap none of it ourselves? And is not this the very essence of patriotism? Is not this to think and to act as patriots?

What is all this however but the love of our neighbour, which is everywhere so forcibly recommended to us by Jesus and his apostles, which they make the basis of the christian religion? Is not this the love of our neighbour in the strictest import of the term? Who is nearer to us than our fellow-subjects, our countrymen, nearer than those

those among whom we live and dwell, with whom we share in so many pleasures and sorrows, so many occupations and troubles, with whom we are more intimately and indissolubly connected than with any other set of people? Where do we meet with more frequent opportunities, more urgent motives and encouragements to become useful and to do good to others? Surely the more deeply a man is tinctured with the spirit of christianity, the better christian he is, the more sincere and active a patriot will he also in this respect be. The more cordially he loves his neighbour; the more strongly will he also be actuated by genuine patriotism. — — And does not christianity throughout require us to look not only on our own things, but also on the things of others; not to care solely for ourselves, but also for others; to employ all our gifts and acquirements for the benefit of the whole community, to consider and conduct ourselves as members of one body; not to do that which pleases ourselves alone, but that which is profitable and salutary to many; that we should mutually esteem, assist and serve each other, unasked, and with alacrity, bear one another's burdens, strive to surpass each other in whatever is laudable and honourable, and be ready even to lay down our lives when the interests of our brethren require it? — — And this undoubtedly is real, genuine patriotism; the love of our country, in-opposition to mean selfishness, a sordid temper, a disinclination to act for the public good,

good, insensibility to the common distress, the general wants and contingencies ; a love of our country that impels us frequently to sacrifice our personal interest to the advantage of the body-politic, readily to contribute as much as we are able to its preservation, to its defence, to its prosperity, and to risk, work, suffer, and do much for it, without looking for any other reward, than that which arises from the consciousness of having done what is fair and equitable. And this love of our country, this patriotism is most effectually encouraged by christianity, and is practised by the true christian far better and from far nobler motives, than by any other wise and well-disposed man. — Here likewise is Jesus his model and exemplar ! Here too he looks to him, walks in the pure light of his unspotted mind, is in words and works, in sentiments and actions, a follower of Jesus, who lived far more for others than for himself, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others, in what he did or what he omitted to do never consulted what was easiest or most troublesome to him, what was most agreeable or disagreeable, but what was best and most generally useful ; who, though he went first after the lost sheep of the house of Israel, sought to deliver and to improve his brethren after the flesh, and at last laid down his life for them, yet at the same time said nothing and did nothing, that could foster their fond national pride, or confirm them in

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in their repugnant, inimical dispositions towards other nations, and who even devised the most effectual means, for extending as far as possible his help and his salvation, and to bless mankind of every nation upon earth. — Such also is the temper of the real christian. He thinks and acts disinterestedly and liberally; willingly sacrifices his private emoluments to the general prosperity; endeavours worthily to fill the station allotted him by the wise disposer of all things, faithfully to discharge the office entrusted to him, to be peculiarly serviceable to that spot, that society, those persons, that government, wherewith providence has most intimately connected him, and there to do as much good and to diffuse as much happiness around him, as his means at all times will allow. But notwithstanding this, he is neither blind to the defects and errors, nor vain and proud of the advantages which his countrymen possess in preference to others; nor is he partial, nor unjust, nor illiberal, nor cruel to other persons and nations: and thus holds a course clear from those deviations into which false patriotism, or that which is commonly called the love of our country, is apt to mislead mankind.

With this false patriotism, which however generally passes for genuine, christianity cannot indeed consist; to that it neither can, nor should we expect it to be, propitious, and the censure passed upon it on that account, must be considered

as its greatest honour by all wise and good men, who are actuated by enlightened principles of humanity. You need only to compare the principles and ends of both, for being impressed with a lively sense of the glaring opposition between them, and at the same time for immediately perceiving on which side lies truth or error, honour or disgrace.

Christianity demands, that all mankind should love each other as brethren and sisters, as children of one God and father in heaven, as the redeemed of one lord, as members of one body, as co-heirs of the same felicity; that they should respect in every person, from what quarter soever coming and however called, the image of their creator, the thinking, rational mind, formed for immortality, and assist and serve every one, to the best of their abilities on the road that leads them to their common destination: whereas false patriotism demands, that we should embrace with sincere and tender affection only those persons and those nations, acknowledge for our real brothers and sisters, and treat as such only those who belong to one and the same body-politic and inhabit the same country with us; and if false patriotism do not expressly command us, it at least permits us to be careless and indifferent to all other persons and nations, to behold them with scornful or envious eyes, to take no interest in what befalls them, unless it be to rejoice at

their

their misfortunes, and in particular respects to hate them as obstacles to us in the acquisition of wealth or aggrandisement.

Christianity demands, that all mankind, all nations, who collectively compose only one large family, should have intercourse with one another, communicate to each other their respective talents, capacities, perceptions, abilities, properties and acquirements; that by thus amicably bartering them they should reciprocally aid and assist each other in better cultivating and employing the products of their soil and their industry, in the speedier expansion of their intellectual faculties, in the improvement of their manners, in easing the burdens of life, in augmenting their pleasures, and in making farther progress on the road to physical and moral perfection. False patriotism on the contrary demands, that we should carefully conceal from others the advantages of nature and art, which we possess, keep them entirely to ourselves; that we should not reveal to any other nation our keener perceptions, our superior ingenuity, our useful discoveries and inventions, that we should grant to foreigners as few privileges and load them with as many burdens and imposts as possible, confine ourselves within the larger or narrower circle to which we belong, and leave as far as may be all that lies beyond its pale, in ignorance, in barbarism, in an immoral or in a weak and wretched condition, or even plunge it into misery.

Christianity

Christianity demands, that we should respect and love all that is true and beautiful and good, wheresoever and in whomsoever we may perceive it, that we should call good every good action and bad every bad one, no matter who may have done either the one or the other; that we should be just even to our enemy, and praise him if he be deserving of praise, that we should neither undervalue the virtue of a stranger, nor palliate the crime of a brother; that we should impartially judge of the talents and of the defects, of the good and of the perverse dispositions, of the respectable and of the despicable qualities that are peculiar to every person and every nation, and rejoice in all the bounties and blessings, which God has distributed among his children, all the sources of joy and felicity, which he has opened to them, whether we discover them among ourselves or among others, with enemies or with friends, here or there, near us or afar off: false patriotism on the contrary demands, that we should prefer our own people, our own nation, to all others, that we should hold its constitution, its government, its manners and customs, its knowledge, its actions as positively the best; that we should not acknowledge the advantages which other people, other nations possess, or at least depreciate and dispute them on every occasion, on the other hand expose, exaggerate, publish their defects; that we should rather falsify history, ra-

ther call in question the most undeniable facts, rather justify notorious follies and crimes, than suffer any censure to fall on the state or the country to which we belong, or directly confess a truth, which while it reflects credit and honour on others, casts disgrace on ourselves.

Christianity, finally, demands, that every one should protect the other in the maintenance and enjoyment of his rights, privileges and immunities; treat him like a brother and not like a slave, in no respect injure or hurt him, and in every instance deal with him and act by him, as he in similar circumstances would wish to be dealt with and acted by: false patriotism on the contrary demands, that we should constantly endeavour to extend our own consequence and contract that of others, to aggrandise the power of our state, to enlarge the borders of our country, at the expense of others, to subdue the neighbouring nations by force or fraud, to draw their commerce to ourselves, to strip them gradually of their liberty, to undermine their prosperity, and totally to overthrow it, if it be feasible, and advantageous to our own. Such is the difference, my pious hearers, such the opposition between the principles of christianity and the maxims of false patriotism! So glaringly do they contradict each other! And must it not reflect honour on christianity, is it not a manifest proof of its origin from above, that it in nowise favours what is
commonly

commonly called the love of our country, but which in fact is misanthropy; that it does not inculcate a separation of interests but a conjunction, not division but union, not selfishness but generosity, not falsehood but veracity, not injustice but impartial right; that it does not impede but promote the progress of the whole race of mankind to higher perfection and happiness? Surely then, I repeat it, if christianity were not thus constituted, it could not proceed from God, the great parent of mankind, the eternal fount of love, who is no respecter of persons, but whose mercy is over all his works!

Revere then christianity, o man, thou that hast the happiness to be a professor of it, revere it as the most benevolent, most beneficial, most philanthropical doctrine, as the best means for disseminating the sentiment of the human dignity and with it liberty, joy and felicity over all the earth. And then if, as a man, as a christian, as a subject, thou wouldst at once fulfil the duties of christianity and the duties of true patriotism, — and they are indeed perfectly compatible — then let me recommend to thee the rules and suggestions that follow.

Add first according to the apostolical precept in our text to brotherly kindness charity, or universal kindness. Comprehend the whole race of mankind in thy affection, as brothers and sisters, with sincere, with heartfelt benevolence, whether they

they belong to thy own or to another people, inhabit thy own or another country, profess thy own or another religion; whether they follow thy own or other manners and customs, — whether they are above or below thee in wealth; in power, in knowledge, and desert. Exclude no one from thy benevolence, to whom God is benevolent, and he is benevolent to all his creatures, to all mankind! Let not the events that befall any, the success and misfortunes of any be indifferent to thee! Rather rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, pray for all, have communion in spirit with all, however divided from thee by continents and seas and forms of government and language and opinions and the worship of God.

Act however, and this is a second prudential rule of conduct, act principally in the place, which providence has assigned thee for thy abode, in the circle of thy family, of thy fellow-subjects, of thy countrymen; provide first for the welfare of the persons among whom thou livest, and the country wherein thou dwellest, for the smaller or the larger society with which thou art most acquainted and connected, and consequently where thou mayst have the most multifarious, the most effective influence. Devote chiefly to them thy sagacity, thy faculties, thy good-offices, and make their concerns thy own. — Otherwise, by resolving to act too extensively, thou wouldst perhaps

haps effect nothing at all or nothing beneficial — by aiming to perform too great matters, thou wouldst neglect the smaller that are within the scope and compass of thy abilities, — otherwise, for want of a fixt point somewhere, whence thou shouldst proceed, whither thou shouldst return, and which would give consistence and solidity to thy plans and exertions, thou wouldst be in perpetual fluctuation, intending much but doing little, planning much but executing little; and, wishing to act everywhere at one and the same time, thou wouldst do nothing anywhere.

Art thou then punctual, and this is my third suggestion, art thou then punctual in the discharge of thy domestic and social duties; art thou willingly and faithfully employed in the contracted sphere, which God has allotted thee by thy birth, by thy station, by thy circumstances; and thou hast still sagacity, abilities, properties, which thou canst lend, communicate, give to adjacent or remote people and nations; and there comes a stranger, a foreigner who belongs not to thy house, to thy people, to thy field of action — a human creature, a brother, who is in want of relief, and whom thou canst relieve: oh then hide not thyself from thy own flesh, assist him, do him good, administer to his necessities with the greater alacrity as he is far from those who would otherwise take care of him; and if thou canst in like manner be useful and serviceable to
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a whole country, to a whole people, do it with gladness, let them share in thy light, in thy sagacity, in thy discoveries, impart as much joy and happiness to as many persons as ever thou canst, and do so, because they all, like thee, are children of thy heavenly father and brethren of our lord Jesus Christ.

So wilt thou combine the duties of patriotism with the duties of universal charity, accomplish both the one and the other, and the two species of affection will be blended together in thy heart. The former will never degenerate into misanthropy, nor the latter into injustice and inactivity. In a word, be a christian, think and act as behoves a christian ; so wilt thou be totally actuated by love, and that love will display itself on every object, on every human being, whom God, thy father in heaven, by the methods of his providence shall present and recommend to thy relief, to thy benevolence and bounty. And thus wilt thou infallibly open to thyself an entrance into his glorious and eternal kingdom, where all his children, all the wise and good from every tribe and nation under heaven shall assemble, all mutually rejoice in each other, and impart reciprocally perfection and felicity without envy or jealousy for ever and ever.

SERMON XLVIII.

The Value of Fidelity.

GOD, who governest and disposest all things, we also, thy creatures, thy children, are under thy guidance and inspection, thy supreme controul; and in this we rejoice with one heart and one voice before thee! For thou governest us and all things by the eternal laws of wisdom and equity, thou rulest us with paternal condescension and love. Perfection and happiness is the ultimate aim of all that thou disposest and dost, and never canst thou fail of thy purpose; all of us may and ought to concur with it, all of us must and shall promote it: and thrice happy we, if we do so with cheerfulness and alacrity, with consciousness and delight! Thou hast assigned to every one of us his particular station in thy realm, dispensed to every one of us a particular portion of capacities and powers, committed to every one particular occupations, granted to every one particular interests and pleasures, and requirest from all only faithfulness and integrity.

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From no one dost thou exact more than he is able to perform; thou judgest none by his outward adventitious preferments, but every one according to his intrinsic worth, according to the dispositions of his heart. No respect of person is of weight with thee; no outward appearance can impose on thee. To do thy will, to be thy dutiful children, thy faithful servants, that is our glory, that our happiness, whether we be low or high, rich or poor, whether we have great or small concerns to manage in the world, have received more or less from thee. Far be it then from us to be ashamed of the post thou hast assigned us, or to complain of the want of abilities, or to be dissatisfied with the affairs which thou hast committed to us, and with the satisfactions and pleasures which thou hast dispensed to us! We are and have and do always that, which thou wilt that we should be and have and do. And should not that suffice us? Yes, to obey thee, to serve thee, is true honour and felicity, in whatever place, in whatever station, by whatever occupations! Be it our only care, so to be whatever we are, so to use whatever we have, whatever we do so to do, as is agreeable to thy will. Strengthen us to that end, most merciful father. Teach us to do thy will and to acquiesce in thy good-pleasure. Let all of us be found faithful in thy sight. Accompany in that view the delivery of thy word with thy blessing, and hearken to our prayer

prayer for the sake of thy great love and of the son of thy love Jesus-Christ our lord, in whose name and words we sum up our petitions: Our father, &c.

LUKE XVI. 10.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.

HE who would be and do more, than he can be and do, or he who would be and do all at once what he is only able to become and to perform by slow degrees, generally is and does nothing, or at any rate much less, than according to his capacities and circumstances he might be and do. Thus it is in natural, thus likewise in moral concerns. He that would attain some distant object, without advancing towards it step by step, but resolves directly to seize upon it as he views it from afar, will never reach it. He who could very easily carry a heavy burden, by dividing it into ten smaller burdens, yet resolves to transport it all at once, will either sink under it, or from fatigue leave it lying on the road. Thus it frequently fares with the youth, who resolves to be learned and wise all at once. The multitude and the difficulty of the objects that he sees and endeavours to comprehend, so bewilder and confound him, that in utter hopelessness he gives up his endeavours after wisdom and learning. So likewise it often happens with the man of business,

ness, who determines to be rich in a short space of time; so also with the ambitious man who resolves to mount at once to the summit of honour and fame. Both the one and the other overlook and neglect that which they might do with the desired success, and vainly grasp at objects that are far beyond their sphere. Thus too it not unfrequently fares with the man, my pious hearers, who resolves to attain at once to a high degree of moral goodness, of virtue, of general utility, who would undertake more and operate further, than his abilities and his situation allow. He would complete the edifice before he has laid the foundation. He requires to have important concerns committed to his trust, ere he has given competent proofs of his honesty and fidelity. He overlooks, contemns, neglects the detail; and by not learning how properly to use and employ it, renders himself unworthy and incapable of the gross for which he is striving. And this is what our saviour in the text would teach us by saying: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and contrariwise: He that is unfaithful in that which is least is unfaithful also in much. ~~This~~ holds good as to the abilities a man may possess, and the manner how he employs them: as to the station or the post he occupies and the method in which he acquits himself of it: as to the functions he has to perform and the manner in which he performs them: as to the satisfactions
and

and pleasures that are granted him, and the manner how he enjoys them. With regard to all these objects it may be said: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unfaithful in that which is least is unfaithful also in much.

First, therefore, with a view to the abilities which the man has, and the manner how he employs them. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unfaithful in that which is least is unfaithful also in that which is much. He that faithfully employs the few circumscribed abilities which he has, by doing as much good with them as ever he can, will also faithfully employ far greater abilities, should they fall to his lot, and do still more good with them: and he that neglects and misemploys the former, would also misemploy and neglect the latter. The one who is faithful in little, understands the value of his abilities, feels his obligation to make a proper use of them, turns them to the best account, finds a pleasure in the good he performs by them, and learns from experience that they are strengthened and increased in proportion as he faithfully employs them; and this tendency of mind would certainly not allow him to leave greater abilities unemployed, or to employ them less carefully and conscientiously. — And here, my dearest friends, we are extremely apt to deceive ourselves no less criminally than injuriously.

Yes,

Yes, says many a one to himself, if I had but more health, more strength, more resolution, how readily would I employ them in doing good! How many useful projects would I execute! Yes, if I had the knowledge of that great scholar, the sagacity of that experienced person, the means of that rich man, the authority of that high personage, the consequence and the rank of that nobleman; what would I not undertake and accomplish! How ardently labour at the improvement of my contemporaries! How affectionately support the weak, and guide the wandering! How much light, how much joy, how much happiness diffuse around me by my benefactions and my succour! How readily prove a father to the fatherless and a comfort to the wretched. How impressively defend the cause of truth and virtue! — But now — so limited, so impotent, so poor, so unimportant and unknown, so lost among the crowd as I am, — what can I attempt and achieve! How vain, how ineffectual would my best exertions be! — And amidst these idle wishes and complaints the man abandons himself to sloth and remains inert. Because he cannot operate immediately in the gross, on the whole, he will do nothing mediately in the detail. Because he is not able to do everything, or not very much, he does nothing at all. But wouldst thou in earnest, o thou who so thinkest and actest, wouldst thou in earnest, if thy wishes were accomplished, if far
greater

greater abilities had fallen to thy lot, wouldst thou have more faithfully employed them? Would not thy indolence, which now renders thee so listless and inert, have always found new pretences for leaving them unemployed, or for very negligently employing them? No; he that is unfaithful in small matters is unfaithful also in great. No; if thou art really desirous to do uncommonly much good, begin by doing all the good thou canst with the little that thou hast. Do first the smaller with more conscientious fidelity, if thou wouldst be thought capable and fond of doing great things. Sincerely employ thy limited inferior abilities, if from true philanthropy, from a generous avidity for what is beautiful and excellent, thou requirest to have greater. Weep with them that weep, if thou canst not relieve them. Bestow personal service on the miserable, if thou art not able to rescue them from their misery by pecuniary liberality or by powerful assistance. Be useful to thy children, to thy family, to thy friends and acquaintance, if thou hast no opportunity for being immediately serviceable to the state. Comfort the innocent sufferer, the oppressed, if thou art not strong enough to deliver him from his sufferings, or to free him from the yoke of the oppressor. Let the light of thy understanding, of thy knowledge, of thy virtues, shine in retirement, in thy house, if thou canst not let it shine publicly, in the world at large. Preach by thy example, preach
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to the few that know and mind thee, if it be not granted thee to do so as an appointed instructor of larger assemblies. Fidelity in little will teach thee fidelity in much. And in proportion as thou faithfully employest thy abilities, thou wilt strengthen and enlarge them, wilt render thyself capable and worthy of greater abilities, and mayst expect the same reward, as he who is faithful in much. To him that hath, says Jesus, be it much or little, and properly uses that which he has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance, he will constantly be gaining more: but whosoever hath not, or thinks that he has nothing and therefore makes not good use of it, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: this, secondly, holds good with regard to the station that every man fills in the world, and to the manner in which he occupies it. These stations are innumerable, all must be filled, and the choice of them depends not entirely on the individual. He, who called us into being, assigns us also the post we are to occupy in his kingdom. He causes us to be born in a high or in a low condition, in the cottages of the poor or in the palaces of the rich; destines one to wield the sceptre and the other to hold the plough; appoints one to be the commander and ruler over many of his brethren, and subjects the other to his authority and dominion; assigns to the former
a far

a far extended, to the latter a very confined field of action; causes the former to live in the brightest splendour, the latter in the profoundest obscurity. Consequently a man may occupy the lowest, or he may fill the highest station, without being obnoxious to censure for the one or having any merit on account of the other. But whatever be the post that he fills, he may occupy it worthily or not; in any post he may be useful or injurious to his brethren, promote their happiness or increase their misery; in any sphere he may do good or harm, fulfil his duty or neglect it: and this confers honour upon him or loads him with shame; this renders him capable and deserving of promotion or degradation, of being rewarded or punished. For here likewise all depends on probity and fidelity. He who worthily fills his station in the present life, be it never so humble and mean, he who strenuously endeavours there to be and to do, all that he can and ought to be and to do in it; thus levels for himself the way to a higher station in the future world, to a station, the prerogatives whereof relate not so much to the obscurity or the splendour of the present, as to the fidelity with which it has been occupied. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. By the honest, conscientious management of the former he has acquired the inclinations and aptitudes, requisite to the best management of the latter. — Let this truth serve as a warning to
VOL. II. B B thee,

thee, o thou, who livest in a superior and brilliant station! It is not the height and dignity of thy post, but the manner in which thou fillest it, that determines thy worth and thy lot; and only a deeper disgrace and abasement awaits thee, if thou art not as conspicuous above thy brethren for virtue and merit, as thou art elevated above them by authority and power. — But let this truth be an encouragement and comfort to thee, o thou, who fillest perhaps at present one of the meanest offices among thy brethren. Fill it but worthily; be but faithful and conscientious in that, which thou there hast to do; learn only there to obey God and to love mankind, and from obedience towards God and from affection towards mankind to fulfil every duty, though never so apparently insignificant, of thy station: so will thy fidelity raise thee above many others, who from their dangerous elevations now scarcely perceive thee, or look down upon thee with scorn and contempt. — Let no one therefore be discontented with the station that is assigned him by providence; let no one be dazzled by his elevation, none be dispirited at his meanness; none deem the duties of it too troublesome, and none think them too nugatory; let none be negligent or remiss either in little or in much; but let every one assiduously strive to be perpetually more honest in thought and action, and constantly to be found more faithful in the sight of God, the arbiter of the world!

Thus

Thus will every one receive the wages of his fidelity, every one press continually forwards, be ever climbing higher and proceeding from one stage of perfection to another.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: this, thirdly, holds good with reference to the occupations incumbent on each individual, and to the manner in which he carries them on. These are as various as the circumstances and connections in which each man stands, as the vocation and mode of life that each has chosen, or that has fallen to his lot. If one be called to rule over a whole people, an entire kingdom, another is appointed to govern a small municipal society, and a third a still much smaller domestic circle. If one be employed in the most important affairs of government, another has a small spot of ground to cultivate, or some subordinate trade to pursue. If one labours at the improvement of the age in which he lives, or provides for the instruction of his fellow-subjects, another follows commerce or practises some art, a third furnishes us with habitations, a fourth supplies us with provisions, a fifth with the various accommodations and elegancies of life. If the occupations of the one call for greater exertions of mind, those of the other are more fatiguing to the body. If the one provides more for the gross, for the connection and regulation of the whole, the other attends more to the detail,

ore to some one particular fraction of the whole. The occupations of mankind therefore are extremely numerous and diversified. Their dignity and their importance any more than their influence and their consequences are not the same. But all may manage and attend to them, well or ill, in a laudable or in a disgraceful manner; the greatest and most important may be neglected, and the least and most trivial be discharged with honourable fidelity. And on this fidelity almost all depends. He that is faithful in little is faithful also in much. He who transacts the apparently small concerns, consigned to him at present, according to the best of his judgment, with all possible care and conscientiousness, will no less carefully and conscientiously transact more important affairs, if ever they be committed to him. He that honestly fulfils the petty duties of his calling, will not decline much heavier duties when required. He who studies punctuality in the observance of what is due to his brethren and never omits any service, how inconsiderable soever, that he can render them, will also not be remiss in the observance of what God requires of him, and whatever belongs to his service. He that with an honest and good heart corresponds with his temporal vocation in this world, however humble and mean it may be, will also be apt and qualified for corresponding with his higher vocation in the world to come. — If therefore thou, my christian brother,

brother, with conscientious fidelity apply thyself to the instruction and formation of the few scholars and pupils that are now entrusted to thee, so wilt thou hereafter be qualified for becoming the teacher and guide of larger societies, and as faithfully labouring in the enlargement of the kingdom of truth and of virtue among the full-grown, as thou dost at present among thy little ones. If in the quality of father of a family thou maintain discipline and order, peace and concord in thy house, and rule all thy inmates with impartiality, with discretion and kindness, so wilt thou also be, if called to it, an impartial judge of the people, a faithful magistrate and overseer of thy fellow subjects. If thou honestly manage the little that thy friends, that widows and orphans entrust to thee, so wilt thou also honestly manage greater property in public offices, even the whole revenues of the state. He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. — — The reason of it is obvious. It signifies not, as we have frequently told you, it signifies not so much what we do, as the manner how we do it. Fidelity in small matters promotes our intrinsic perfection, our aptness to justice and beneficence, just as much as fidelity in great concerns; and that is the foundation of this, by the one we learn the other. For: thereby we learn to hearken to our conscience, we learn to attend to its voice and directly to follow its impulses; and if we do this in
little,

little, surely we shall do so and still more in great matters. Its suggestions will in either case be important to us, its approbation always precious. If we are alarmed at its rebukes on venial failings, we shall shudder at its reproaches on greater delinquences. By fidelity and care in small matters we learn to act in all particulars upon principle, by sound, invariable maxims, we acquire the love of order, of exactitude; we habituate ourselves to esteem every duty as sacred and inviolable, and the inclination to do that, which is lawful and right, which is our duty, will gradually become natural to us: and when we have learnt this, when we have accustomed ourselves to it, how can we act contrary to those principles, that love of order, that inclination to duty, that conscientiousness, if called upon to transact greater affairs, more important concerns? Hast thou then, o man, in pursuance of thy calling and thy connections with others, only to do with comparatively small matters, only apparently trifling concerns to transact, let not that mislead thee to negligence. Be careful, be faithful, be conscientious in that, which thou hast to do, however slight and mean it may be. This will render thee just as intelligent and good, just as accomplished and as capable, hereafter, whether in the present or in the future world, to undertake and execute more important matters, as though thou hadst already been employed in such affairs.

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He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he who properly manages the least, may promise himself greater things: this finally holds good with regard to the amusements and pleasures, that are granted to each of us, and the manner how he enjoys them. Yes, my pious hearers, even amusements and pleasures are goods entrusted to us, are gifts and presents of the great sovereign of the world, the use whereof is by no means indifferent, and in the indulgence and employment of them fidelity and integrity are required. To be sensible to the value of the pleasures and amusements of life; to indulge in them with cheerfulness and gratitude; to enjoy them under a lively sense of the goodness of God, the supreme dispenser of joy; to be excited by them to delight in his love, to obey his commands, to trust in his providence, to a liberal affection towards all mankind, to the willing discharge of every duty: this is to use them faithfully. And he who does this in little, renders himself capable of doing it in great. He therefore that enjoys the inferior, but innocent, advantages, pleasures, amusements of this life with an open, a tender and susceptible heart, with inward complacency in all that is beautiful and good, with cordial satisfaction in his own existence and in the existence of God, he who learns to be happy in God and his providence: in so doing renders himself qualified for greater, superior felicities in the future world; he

he smooths to himself the way to the enjoyment of the purer delights of heaven. Yes, my dearest friends, he does not best prepare himself for the prerogatives and felicities of the future life, who contemplates all that surrounds and befalls him, on its gloomy side; seems on all hands to find causes of discontent and complaint, and goes joyless and sad about the beautiful world of God. How can that be a preparation for superior happiness and joy! No; he alone prepares himself for them aright, who seeks, discovers, reveres the traces of divine bounty on all sides; who feels himself everywhere encompassed and overflowed with the benefits of his creator and father, as much as with his light and with his air; and even does not overlook or turn aside in disdain from such single, scattered flowers as he may chance to meet with on his path, because he cannot always, perhaps but seldom can range in flowery fields, or delight himself in gardens enameled with various dyes and breathing mingled odours. Wouldst thou therefore in this respect be faithful, o man, and qualify thyself for greater things; rejoice in all the good, that thou art and hast and canst do, however little and insignificant it may appear to others; rejoice in every recreation, every amusement that falls to thy share; learn to rejoice in every flower of the field, every living creature, every reasonable being; enjoy the flavour of the simplest food, the quiet and security
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of thy humble cottage, the repose of thy undorned couch, the confidential attachment of thy few inmates and friends, the commonest beauties of nature, enjoy them as cheerfully, as gratefully, as perhaps but few of the rich and great enjoy their delicate viands, the accommodations and elegancies of their splendid palaces, the decorations of their dormitories, the respect and services of their numerous attendants and the most curious productions of art. Look in all things up to God, from whom all good gifts proceed ; consider and enjoy them all as benefactions, as pledges of thy heavenly father's love : so wilt thou be already happy here in every, though ever so comparatively small, proportion of means of pleasure and delight, and thereby capacitate thyself for ever greater, ever purer felicity in the world to come.

So certain, my pious hearers, so fertile is the truth contained in our text : he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. So certain is it, that the grand concern is not how much or how little we have and can and do perform, but rather the manner how we possess and use all this. Oh may we deeply imprint this truth upon our hearts, my dearest friends ! May we all, enlightened by its light, come to this firm, unalterable resolution : However limited my faculties, however humble my station, however inconsiderable my business, however common and ordinary
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my pleasures and amusements, I will nevertheless faithfully employ the faculties that I have, properly fill the post I occupy, conscientiously transact the affairs of my calling, cheerfully and thankfully enjoy the amusements and pleasures that are vouchsafed me; and in this method will I contentedly and boldly urge my course after greater faculties, after a higher station, after more important concerns, after purer joys, and expect all this, as the unmerited, glorious recompence of my fidelity, from the God with whom integrity and fidelity are of all avail!

SERMON XLIX.

Signs of Growth in Goodness.

GOD, how lofty is our destination ! How grand the perfection to which thou hast called us, as christians ! To become continually wiser, continually better, to be continually gaining a nearer and brighter resemblance of thy son our saviour, daily more to be renewed after thy image, and thus to advance ever nearer to thee, the supreme, the absolutely perfect being : to this end hast thou ordained and called us ! And to this end hast thou endowed us with all necessary capacities and powers, and supplied us with the most forcible inducements and impulses, the best resources. Oh what might we all be and do and become, were we continually mindful of our destination, continually obedient to thy call ! And yet we are so prone to be indolent and remiss in goodness ! And yet we are so easily and readily satisfied with that which we have already done and are become ! And yet we are so soon weary of reaching out after higher perfection, and so frequently

quently lose sight of the glorious prize which thou hast set before us ! And then perhaps we complain of the obstacles, which we ourselves have thrown in the way, of the difficulties with which we ourselves incumber our course, of the want of pleasure and satisfaction in the exercise of virtue, for which at the same time we alone are to blame ! Ah, merciful God, look down with pity and pardon on us, thy frail and feeble children ! Let us no longer walk the path of duty and virtue with such infirm, uncertain steps. Teach us better to understand our high vocation and to think and act more conformably to it ! Inspire us with fresh courage, with renovated ardour, with recruited energies to do what is good in thy sight, to continue our efforts after christian perfection. Grant also that our present reflections on the doctrines of religion may be blessed to that end. Grant that we may turn our whole attention on ourselves, call ourselves to account concerning our progress in goodness, and that so sincerely, so impartially that we need not shun the thought of thy omniscience and omnipresence, and then let the knowledge of our defects and the sentiment of our failings impel us powerfully to labour at our sanctification. We pray thee for these mercies in the name of thy son, our lord, and sum up our petitions as his votaries in the words which in pity to our infirmities he vouchsafed to teach us. Our father, &c.

1 CORINTH. XV. 58.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

BY the very nature and constitution of our soul, my pious hearers, we must either proceed and advance farther in goodness, or go backwards. To be stationary in knowledge and in virtue, can only be conceived of a being that is absolutely perfect, that can neither be wiser nor better, than it actually is. The most true and just sentiment, unless I often renew it in my mind, will gradually be effaced and give room to doubt and error; the most generous affection, unless I nourish it, will gradually be weakened and yield to other less generous or even to sordid affections; the greatest skill and dexterity, unless I employ it, will gradually decline and allow the difficulties already conquered, to spring up afresh. On the other hand, I cannot revive any true, just idea with proper attention, without begetting in me other conceptions equally true and just, and consequently without advancing farther in knowledge. I cannot purposely and with pleasure nourish any good affection, without strengthening it by the same means and acquiring fresh vigour to good action; I cannot properly employ any virtuous aptness, without rendering the employment of it still more facile, more free and connatural to the soul. Thus it is in morals: but the case is totally

tally different with material objects. These are worn out, decayed, destroyed by use; the former are preserved, multiplied, perfected by use. The kingdom may remain wealthy, though its riches are not increased; it has only to keep or not consume what it has got. The virtuous man cannot remain virtuous without constantly becoming more virtuous. The non-employment of his endowments and abilities, to him is real loss; whereas the diligent, strenuous employment of that, which he has already gained and acquired, is real profit. Here therefore is no need of moderation and false modesty to set bounds to our desires and exertions. Here complete satisfaction with ourselves and our condition is always pernicious. He who aims not at purer virtue, at higher perfection, runs great risque of losing even the virtue and perfection to which he has already attained. In short, he who would not run retrograde in goodness, must push forward in it, he must, according to the frequent exhortations in holy writ, be continually growing, ever increasing, always abounding in the work of the Lord. This then being the true state of the case, my pious hearers, it must be of the utmost consequence to us, to know, whether we are positively growing and increasing in goodness, because otherwise our virtue, or the religious frame of our heart and life, must fall under suspicion. Let us then for once, my dear friends, institute a serious inquiry

inquiry concerning our growth in goodness. My present discourse is designed to furnish you with the signs or marks of this growth, and to induce you to compare your own condition with them. We are already again drawing towards the conclusion of a year, already are we again invited to solemnize the sacred supper, to the celebration of a christian festival. What then is more natural than for us to put the question? Whether since the termination of the foregoing year, since the keeping of the last festival, the last attendance at the lord's table, we have remained true to our good, christian dispositions, exercised and confirmed ourselves in them, and of course increased in goodness, or not? Oh let us treat this question with that gravity, and answer it to ourselves with that impartiality which befits creatures who must one day be examined upon it at the bar of a higher tribunal.

The first sign of growth in goodness is, if we actually do more good, than we formerly did, if our faith work progressively more by love, be continually more fruitful in good works, if the integrity of our hearts, the sincerity of our christian dispositions, our desire to please God and to promote the welfare of our brethren be more and more apparent and effective in good actions. Much indeed depends on external causes, opportunities, incentives, conjunctures, on the portion of abilities and means, that each individual possesses.

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These are not always, are never entirely in our own power. They all depend on the disposals of providence and on the connections in which it has placed us. We have not all the same capacities and abilities, and even those which we have are not always alike great and vigorous, not always serviceable to an equal extent. It is the same with the other objects, which may ascertain the sum of our good actions. Sometimes we have more, at others fewer, now stronger, then weaker motives and encouragements to goodness; one while greater, then again less opportunity and requisition to serve and be useful to others. To one, God assigns a larger, to another a narrower sphere, for exerting his faculties and effectuating good. To one he commits five, to another ten talents, which he is to put out to interest. One person shall succeed better with regard to dispositions, inclinations, endeavours, to industry and fidelity in christian virtue, than another, and yet do less good than this other, who has not gone so far in them, because the latter had more means and abilities and opportunities for it than the former. The question therefore properly is this : Whether with the same portion of abilities, whether in similar circumstances, with the like motives and opportunities, we do more good than we were used to do before? Or, whether, having the abilities and the means to that purpose, we dilate more than we contract ourselves with respect to
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beneficence, to general utility, to preventing kindness, and tender endearments; whether we are less apt to neglect, more careful to employ the opportunities of doing anything good and useful; and are more and more active and assiduous in the best application of our abilities, in the performance of whatever duty and conscience require? Whether, in a given portion of our lives we can call to our memories more days, that are distinguished from others, by particular good, generous acts, or by extraordinary triumphs over iniquity? However, since we have not always, perhaps but seldom, the opportunity for judging of our growth in goodness by this criterion, and as here likewise the principal concern is, how we do that which we are able and ought to do, rather than what we perform, we will proceed to other marks of our growth in goodness, the application whereof is attended with fewer difficulties.

A second sign of our growth in christian virtue is therefore, if we be more inclined to good, if we have a greater relish for it, take more delight in it, rejoice more in the good that is done, than heretofore. We set about acquiring christian integrity and begin to work at our improvement, thus we indeed do good, perhaps a great deal of good, but we must still in some degree force ourselves to it; our understanding has still more share in it than our heart. We discharge our duty; but still it frequently appears burthensome

to us, we sometimes cannot forbear wishing secretly, that in some particular instance or another we might decline it. We perform some exercises of devotion, we devote certain seasons and hours to lonely meditation, to reflection, to prayer; but generally rather because we look upon it as an obligation, than because we promise ourselves much pleasure and satisfaction from it. The case is very different however, when we are farther advanced in goodness. The oftener and the longer we have followed the precepts of virtue, the more do we understand and feel how just, how equitable, how venerable they are, how greatly the practice of them promotes our perfection and happiness. The more good we have already done, so much the more experience have we acquired how agreeable and useful the consequences of it are both to ourselves and to others. The oftener we have thwarted our foolish desires, the oftener we have subjected our sensual appetites to the measures of reason, the more dignity does it give us in our own estimation, the dearer is every victory we gain over ourselves and sensuality. The oftener and more punctually we have fulfilled our duty, the more firm and stable is our peace of mind, the more grateful our self-satisfaction. The longer we have employed ourselves in rational exercises of devotion, and the oftener we have succeeded in doing so in spirit and in truth, greater light diffuses itself over our minds, greater order

order and tranquillity reign in our hearts, the more conversant are we in the doctrines of religion, which elevate the mind of man, and cause him to feel his high destination and his blessed connection with deity. In proportion therefore as we farther advance in all these respects, in the same proportion must we also find greater relish in them; and by parity of reasoning, the more pleasure all these objects procure us, the better acquainted must we have rendered ourselves with them, the farther advances must we have made in them. Would you then judge of your progress in goodness, my pious hearers, ask yourselves: Need I now lay less restraint upon myself in all these respects, than formerly? Does my heart, my inclination impell me more to them than the bare cold idea that it is an indispensable obligation? Are justice and beneficence become a delight to me? Do I experience and feel how amply every good, generous action rewards itself? Do I eagerly seize every opportunity for it? Do I profit by it with alacrity and without any repugnance? Are the hours that I devote to the worship of God, to devotion, truly hours of recreation? Do they procure me real gratification, and more pleasure, than perhaps otherwise harmless, but entirely sensual distractions and amusements procure me? Can I sacrifice these to them and neglect the latter for their sake, without feeling the want or the loss of them?

A third sign of our growth in goodness is, if we do good with greater facility and promptitude. This is a natural consequence of the foregoing. What we do readily, what we do with pleasure, what our heart impells us to, that costs us little trouble, that generally succeeds. And the oftener we repeat an action or a species of action, so much the easier and abler we perform it. Our ideas and our faculties thus acquire a determinate, firm direction. The former present themselves to us at once in greater perspicuity and with united force, and the latter never refuse us their aid, whenever we want it. We have no occasion first anxiously to collect the former and with much trouble to rouse and set in motion the latter. We conceive and do that, which we have already so often conceived and done, and what by this means is become as it were natural to us. — Along a road with which we are thoroughly acquainted, which we have already often gone, we walk with far greater ease and celerity, we are delayed by much fewer interruptions and embarrassments, we lose ourselves far seldomer in mazy crossings and turnings; we see these obstructions and interruptions before hand, avoid them, are aware of those crossings and turnings, and come much sooner and with far less fatigue to the end of our journey, than one who is ignorant of his way, must first explore it, often wander from it, and is surprised at every little rub and obstruction that he happens to stumble upon.

upon. — If ye therefore, my pious hearers, whenever ye should abstain from any evil, or do something good, whenever your virtue comes in conflict with your sensuality, your duty with your propensity to pleasure, if you then must antecedently enter into many considerations, previously collect together and circumstantially call to mind the several motives by which justice, honour, interest, fear and hope urge and oblige you to abstain from the one or to practise the other ; if you must then laboriously exert your faculties, ere you come to resolve and to act : it is a manifest proof that you are as yet feeble novices in goodness, that you are not got far in christian integrity. If on the contrary the thought, this is right, this is expedient, this is agreeable to the will of God, this is consonant to the temper, to the dignity of a christian, instantly decides you, instantly communicates to you force and excitement, to do that which is incumbent on you to do at the time and what on the present occasion is the fittest and best ; if you instantly hearken to the call of God, to the voice of your conscience, and without consulting flesh and blood, without being misled by the objections of sensuality or sloth, unreservedly obey them ; if, for example, it costs you no great pains and exertion, no hard struggle with yourselves, to suppress the emotions of resentment or anger, in forgiving an adversary, in preferring duty to pleasure, to be patient in afflictions, to make various sacrifices to virtue : it is a sure sign, that

that you have trained yourselves up in goodness, that you are advancing towards christian perfection, that from children you are become men in christianity.

A fourth sign of our growth in goodness is, if we are less alarmed at the impediments and difficulties we meet with in the practice of it, encounter them with greater composure, and combat them with more courage and resolution. The longer we travel the road of christian virtue and integrity, the more are we convinced by personal experience, that these impediments and difficulties are by no means invincible; and the oftener we have actually conquered them and successfully employed our forces in combating them, the stronger and bolder do we feel, to combat and to conquer them again. The novice in goodness starts at every unwonted object, shudders at every trifling obstacle, is frightened at every opposition, dismayed at every danger. If he fall, he remains lying on the ground, till he can summon up the courage and resolution to rise. He is so taken up with lamenting and complaining of his fall, that he has no time to think of correcting his mistakes. And if his first attempts miscarry, he is but too easily deterred from repeating them. He had rather irresolutely stand folding his hands, is generally more inclined to turn back, than press forwards with collected and redoubled efforts, and work his way perhaps not without pains and conflict through all obstructions. — Totally different

is the case with the well-trained christian who is always abounding in the work of the Lord, and pressing forward to higher perfection. He is not afraid, where there is nothing to fear, and even where there is ground for apprehension neither allows it to dishearten or confound him. The oftener he has already conquered, the less need he decline the combat; the nearer he approaches the goal, the less does he allow anything to deter him from pursuing the race. New difficulties are not unfrequently to him only new stimulants to diligence, to ardour, to more strenuous perseverance. Even his mistakes, his aberrations, his tardy progress cannot intimidate him from pursuing his way, nor depress his spirits upon it. If he fall, he wastes no time in fruitless lamentations, rises without delay and pursues his course with additional prudence and caution.—Do ye know yourselves by these lineaments, my pious hearers? Are ye not afraid to enter the lists with your passions? Do ye boldly encounter the obstacles ye meet with in the discharge of your duty? Do ye then inquire not so much about what is easy or difficult, as about what is right and proper and best for the occasion? Does the mockery of fools and the example of the wicked make less and less impression upon you? Do ye seldomer than ever turn aside either to the right hand or to the left from the path of the just, and does the nearer view of the heavenly prize increase your ardour to reach it?

A fifth

A fifth sign of our growth in goodness is, if we act upon nobler principles, in purer views, if we act rather from love than from fear, rather from inclination than from compulsion. When a man first pays attention to his moral state, learns to perceive his defects and corruption, and begins to labour at his amendment, he is commonly more actuated by servile than by filial sentiments towards God, more by fear than by love. His state appears to him extremely dangerous, and this danger he is determined to avoid. The lamentable experience he has already had of the pernicious effects of his follies and iniquities, gives him reason to dread more fatal consequences from them. The abasement and misery into which vice plunges its slaves, strike him with horror; and the thought of a holy and almighty God, who is the judge of him and of the whole world, threatens him with punishments, which in magnitude and duration transcend his power of conception. He feels the want of real happiness and the vanity and deceitfulness of everything wherein he has hitherto been seeking it. To avoid those calamities and to supply this want, he abstains from evil, does good, and resolves now to work an alteration in his mind and manners. As yet however he is unacquainted with the beauty and loveliness of virtue, the dignity and the felicity of a truly christian temper and life; as yet the idea of God communicates to him more uneasiness and embarrassment

ment than confidence and joy ; as yet he acts generally rather from constraint than from inclination, rather because he sees no other method of deliverance before him, than because he finds any pleasure in the practice of it. As yet necessity and duty and the dread of punishment and misery are the principal motives of his better conduct. — In proportion however as the man increases in goodness and advances farther on the way of amendment, his thoughts and affections refine. Folly and sin appear to him constantly more shocking and degrading, integrity and virtue more fair and amiable, and thus he learns to abhor the evil, even without regard to its noxious consequences, and to esteem and love the good for itself alone. The sentiment that God is gracious to him, that he loves him with the tenderness of a parent, that he bears with him so patiently and daily blesses him with such numerous benefits, that he designed him for everlasting happiness and has called him to it and assured him of it by his son Jesus ; the idea of all that this son of the Highest did, suffered, sacrificed for the best interests of mankind, the deliverance that he procured to the human race, and the dignity to which he has raised it : all this touches and gradually softens his heart, penetrates it by degrees with warmer gratitude and love towards God and Jesus Christ, and causes the desire of approving himself to so bountiful, so gracious a God and father, and to extol his deliverer for his

his generous aid, to be constantly more active and alert. And thus love casteth out fear. Thus is he animated by the spirit of adoption. Thus does he all that he does, agreeably to the will and to the glory of God. Thus does Christ live and reign in him; and the ardour to imitate him, to acquire a constantly stricter assimilation with him, allows him never to be weary and faint in well-doing. That to him is pleasure and delight, which to the young probationer in virtue is often burdensome and oppressive. Gratitude and love induce him, to what the other is impelled to by necessity and fear. — And are these now, my pious hearers, the motives and the ends of your good conduct? Is your virtue the spontaneous result of childlike obedience to heaven? Is it the love of God, is it the love of Jesus, is it the thence arising love of mankind, is it the sentiment of the dignity of the man and of the christian, is it the aspiration to higher perfection, to a nearer communion with God and with Jesus, is it the prospect of a better world, that actuates and governs you in what you chuse or avoid? Only if ye can honestly answer in the affirmative to these questions, have ye reason to rejoice in your growth in goodness, in making nearer approaches to the mark of the prize of your high calling.

A sixth sign of growth in goodness is, if we do good without any visible beneficial consequences, and let not that disturb us in doing what is right
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and fit ; if we be willing and ready to make any sacrifice to duty and virtue, which they demand of us, and even in those sacrifices find the same pleasure that others do in the enjoyment of the advantages resulting from integrity. This is the very zenith of human virtue. This was the virtue of Jesus, our leader and forerunner. He was absolutely destitute of all extraneous motives and encouragements to virtue. He had nothing to support him, to strengthen him, to animate him, except the approbation of his own heart and the applause of God, his heavenly father. He laboured almost always without any apparent success, found continual opposition and obstruction on his career, passed his life in one perpetual course of self-denial, left the whole harvest of what he had cultivated and sown to his disciples and their successors, and nevertheless performed not one good act the less, nor with less zeal and fidelity, and yet remained as resolute and unwearied, as though all circumstances had favoured him and all he did had immediately yielded fruit in full maturity. The more we resemble in this respect our lord, the greater and more indubitable is our growth in christian virtue. If therefore the teacher, who seems to be labouring absolutely in vain at the improvement of mankind, is yet never weary in pursuing that task with the whole stress of his faculties and the sacrifice of many of the accommodations and comforts of life ; if the patriot,

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whose generous sentiments and merits are entirely overlooked or misconstrued, yet, disregarding all personal considerations of profit, ceases not to think and to act for the public benefit; if the father and the mother of a family proceed indefatigably and unremittingly in superintending the education of their children, directing their behaviour, and forming their manners, however long they may be hoping in vain for the fruits of their labour; if the christian, amidst a corrupt and perverse generation, where no one seems to heed his example, no one to regulate himself by it, where a stricter course of piety is ridiculed and despised, yet perseveres in his christian dispositions, yet does not forbear to talk and to act as becomes a follower of Christ, to let his light shine before men, and to sow his good seed, yet deems not that seed lost though he perceive it neither to spring up nor to thrive, and always cheerfully pursues his way, should he even travel quite alone: if this be the case, if those and these are so disposed and so behave, then are they undoubtedly authorized to rejoice in a very considerable, in an extraordinary progress in christian integrity.

Lastly, my pious hearers, this also is a sign of growth in goodness, if we be at the same time modest, not conceited, neither proud nor presuming on account of what we have already done, but ever urging forward, and never so satisfied with ourselves, as though we need not endeavour to
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become better. The farther the artist has attained, the less he thinks that he has reached the perfection of his art. The more the scholar knows, the more clearly he perceives how much he yet knows not. It is the novice alone in either instance that is generally proud. So likewise the novice in virtue. At first indeed, as we before remarked, he is extremely timorous and shy, frightened at every danger, startled at every obstacle, and averse from all pains and exertion. Presently however he becomes confident and rash, resigns himself implicitly to his own abilities, imagines every little advantage he gains over the enemy to be a total defeat of him, accounts every just and becoming action that he performs an heroic achievement, every step he makes on the road of virtue, a very considerable part of his journey, looks back perhaps with proud disdain on those that are behind him, and in a short time fancies he has surmounted every difficulty, has completed his task, and almost reached the goal. And then — his lusts and passions, rather lulled asleep than subdued, bursting their puny restraints, become more clamorous than before, his ardour relents, his forces abate, his presumption occasions him a fall, and he finds himself thrown back as far, as he fondly thought he had advanced. — The well-disciplined christian on the contrary, my pious hearers, who really abounds in the work of the Lord, is neither timid nor rash, neither proud of
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what he has already done,* nor remiss in what is still incumbent on him to do. Though courage and confidence attend him on his way, yet modesty and discretion never forsake him. He has too often experienced his frailty, implicitly to rely on his strength. He has been too often surprised by unbridled appetites, assailed by unexpected temptations, to believe himself secure and to relax in his vigilance over himself and all that surrounds him. He knows the extent of his duties, the grandeur of his destination, the sanction of the divine laws, the high degree of virtue of which the man and the christian is capable, too well, for ever being able to imagine that he has done all and is become all, that he possibly can do and become. No; all the good that he has already done, is in his sight but little in comparison of what he still desires and strives to do. From complete conviction he thinks and says with the apostle : Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ! No; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. — And is this also your language, my pious hearers, and the language of your hearts ? Do you add to your virtue modesty ? Do you never cease to watch over yourselves and to avoid temptation ? Do you judge yourselves and your good actions with virtuous severity ? Do you never think

think you have done good enough, or that you are sufficiently wise and good? Do you press incessantly and indefatigably towards higher perfection?

These, my pious hearers, are the signs and tokens, by which we may judge of our growth in goodness. If we do more good than formerly; if we love the good; if we do it with greater facility and promptitude: if we are less alarmed at the difficulties attending it and fight against them more valiantly; if we do good from more liberal motives and in purer views; independently of the wished-for success and when attended with various sacrifices; and finally at the same time are modest and constantly pressing forward: then, my dearest friends, then are we always abounding in the work of the Lord, then are we making extraordinary approaches towards christian perfection. Now try yourselves impartially by these marks. Rejoice if ye discover yourselves in the character of the practised christian, rejoice in your progress in goodness, and thank God for the courage and the abilities he has granted you to that end. Be ye the salt of the earth, the light of the world, persons particularly devoted to God and to the service of your brethren. Be ever true to your high and honourable vocation, and become more and more the shining patterns of christian integrity and virtue. — Are ye however still distant from the goal, my pious hearers, are ye still
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weak and wavering novices in goodness; oh let the sentiment of your weakness shame, but not deject you, let your errors and negligences not mislead you into new errors and negligences, but rouse you to redoubled efforts in industry and zeal. No; the crown that sparkles from afar, but stands full in view before you, should inspire you with renovated ardour, resolutely and prudently to run the course that leads to its possession, and never more to lose sight of it, till you have actually attained it. Amen.

SERMON L.

Encouragement and Direction to Growth in Goodness.

GOD, thy commands are essential goodness; commands of the wisest and most benevolent father, who has only in view the happiness of his children. Oh how readily, how zealously ought we to obey thee! How willingly follow thy call, when thou summonest us to continual progress after purer virtue, after higher perfection! And how foolishly, how injuriously to ourselves do we act, when we resist thy commands and refuse to obey thy voice! Surely to obey thee is pure felicity: to refuse obedience to thee is stupidity and misery. No; not for thy sake, but solely for ours hast thou given us such holy laws for our direction, so shining an example of virtue for our model, and so many and forcible incentives and motives for ever becoming wiser and better. For thus alone can we likewise become always more composed and tranquil, always more contented, always more happy. Oh that we continually perceived this truth, were constantly mindful of it,

and paid thee always that filial, joyful obedience, which in all respects we owe thee! Oh that we were never weary in labouring at our improvement, at the advancement of our spiritual, our everlasting perfection, and thus ran with courage and constancy for the glorious prize which thou hast set before us! Teach us then, merciful God, ever better to perceive the grandeur of our destination, the worth of thy bounties, the dignity and the felicity of a truly christian temper and conduct, the satisfactions and advantages of growth in goodness; and oh do thou grant, that we, inflamed with a generous ambition, with gratitude and love to thee, and laying aside all that may retard and incumber us in our exertions after christian perfection, may constantly look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who is gone before us with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven, and with fortitude and perseverance may run the race, which thou, in thy mercy, hast appointed to us. Accompany to that end with thy blessing the doctrines of religion which are now to employ our meditations. Let us clearly perceive their truth, be sensible to their energy and faithfully follow their precepts. These our petitions we present unto thee in the name of Jesus Christ, our lord, and address thee further, as his votaries, with filial trust and confidence, in the words which he himself prescribed us to use. Our father, &c.

1 COR. XV. 58. *

Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

THE desire of advancing farther, of climbing higher, of still gaining greater accessions of perfection and happiness, is more or less common to all mankind. It is grounded in our nature, and can never, even in the extremest degeneracy and embasement of mankind, be entirely and for ever eradicated from the human breast. It is not however always so lively and active, as to exhibit itself in earnest, unabated exertions. It is but too frequently weakened and rendered almost inactive by sensuality, by indolence, by vice. The object every one wishes to attain, but the road that leads to it, to many appears too rugged and wearisome. And even the nobler minded require sometimes to be encouraged to patient zeal, to unflagging progress on the road of christian perfection; that they may not fall into negligence, nor become weary and faint. And this end, my devout audience, I wish to promote by my present discourse. We lately investigated the symptoms by which we may judge of our growth in goodness. Let us to-day inquire into the excitements and obligations to continued progress in christian rectitude and virtue, and at the same time reflect on the means that may afford us facilities in the task. These two particulars I design to make

the object of your attention and the matter of my exhortation.

Consider in the first place, my pious hearers, that the man who is slothful in well-doing, who stands still on the road of virtue, and is not always stretching forward to superior perfection, is far more culpable than he who has never loved nor been addicted to goodness, never took to that road, never rose above sensuality. The former understands his duty, knows the justice and reasonableness of the divine commands, the wisdom, the beauty, the utility of a virtuous and pious life far better than the latter. He has already had many agreeable experiences of it, and knows how well it fares with a man when he does that which is lawful and right; how much greater and better he then feels himself; how comfortably he can then think upon his God; how unabashed and freely he can then converse with his fellow-creatures; how calmly he can then expect futurity; with what satisfaction every victory over iniquity, every good and generous act rewards him. And now he acts in opposition to his own convictions and experiences; quits a way, or stands still on a way, that promises him increasing honour and delight and felicity, as he proceeds upon it. And how much more culpable must such a behaviour render him! And how inconsistent! Yes, my dearest friends, we contradict our own judgments, if, once having begun to work at our improve-
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ment and devote ourselves to virtue, we neglect to exert all our faculties to make farther progress in it. We revere forsooth wisdom, virtue, piety; we look upon them as the chief prerogatives, as the perfection of man, as the means of his happiness. Otherwise we should not certainly have given ourselves any trouble, we should not in many respects have done so much violence to ourselves, in order to become wise and good and pious. But can we then ever be too wise, too good, too pious? Or, which is the same thing, can we ever become too perfect, ever too happy? Perhaps then we are likewise afraid of being too healthy, or of too greatly increasing our riches? And what are wisdom and virtue but the health and strength of the soul? What are knowledge, good affections, good works but the riches of the mind?

Consider further, my pious hearers, if we do not continually exercise ourselves in goodness, be not always endeavouring to proceed farther in it, we commonly go backwards. We seldom stand long still, when we begin to be listless and faint. The light of our knowledge will gradually be darkened, our faith shaken, our fervour cooled, and error, doubt, indolence, indifference slide into their place. And then we run great hazard of losing all that we have been labouring for, of rendering fruitless all the victories we have obtained over ourselves, and retaining nothing except the
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sad remembrance of unsuccessful attempts, defeated exertions, abortive projects, frustrated views and ruined hopes. What numbers have experienced this truth to their utter disgrace and confusion! Let us look a little at one of these backsliders: he struck into the way of improvement with resolution, combated his lusts and passions courageously, gained several considerable victories over them, tore himself from several improper or dangerous connections and bad habits, attended more to his duties, abstained from all gross and flagrant violations of decorum, performed many good actions. But now he fancies that he has done enough and completed the business of his improvement; imagines himself already at the goal, already virtuous and pious enough, though he has only advanced a few paces towards it, and only begun to addict himself to virtue and goodness. He now rests secure, keeps no longer any guard over himself and external objects, dismisses all care of strengthening his faculties by continual exercise, takes no pains to confirm himself in his good dispositions, to improve his good acquirements, to swell the sum of his good deeds, or to combat his smaller, more latent failings, and to eradicate the seeds of that corruption the growth of which he has laboured to prevent; and thus by insensible degrees he grows daily more negligent and supine, plunges from one error into another, becomes less and less
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able to resist the stronger temptations to evil, is oftener overcome by his lusts and passions, till at length he relapses into that state of insensibility and indifference, from which he had freed himself at the expense of so much toil, or lets himself again be carried away by the torrent, which he before had strenuously dared to stem, and cannot get out of the force of the current without the utmost exertion. Deplorable situation, my dearest friends! Who would not, in order to avoid it, guard himself against the first attacks of indolence, against all idea of standing still on the path of virtue, and press forwards with unabated ardour!

The more we on the contrary, and this is a third argument for exciting us to advancement in virtue, the more we exercise ourselves in goodness, the further we proceed in it, the more may we rely on our probity and virtue. Far be it from me, my pious hearers, hereby to mislead you into pride and arrogance, or to efface in you the sense of your natural infirmity and your dependance on the eternal majesty of heaven! No, in saying, that the practised christian may rely more on his probity and virtue, I would only imply, that he runs less risk of stumbling, of falling, of departing from his good, christian sentiments, or of being deterred from good, christian actions. His just and generous principles have too deeply insinuated themselves into his whole system of thought, his inclination

inclination to that which is right and proper, is much too strong and too predominant within him, and the doing of that which he conceives to be right and proper, is become too connatural to him, to permit him to be so easily shaken, unsettled in mind, and seduced. This he knows, this he feels, this he experiences on a thousand occasions; and this inspires him with courage and confidence. And is not that a desirable state? Who would chuse to travel a road, on which he must every instant be afraid of stumbling and falling? How can he in that case enjoy the pleasant and charming scenery of the landscape round, however grand and variegated it may be? Who would spontaneously take upon him to transact a business, which he is ignorant whether he be qualified for or not? Who would voluntarily undertake affairs, which he must continually fear he shall never bring to effect, which he may indeed begin but not finish? Apprehensions, which give great uneasiness to the novice in goodness, and rarely allow him completely to exult in his virtue and to enjoy the fruits of it. Are we on the other hand by exercise further advanced, my pious hearers; if so we need not be anxiously afraid of backsliding into sin, of temptations to evil; then may we the more cheerfully and confidently pursue our onward course through the labyrinths of life, amidst all the rubs and pitfalls of our journey, enjoy all the satisfactions and pleasures

pleasures the way affords, and need not entertain any apprehensions of miscarrying in our design. Thus may we likewise pass our time much more fearlessly even among bad, corrupt persons, have intercourse with bad people, if our calling and duty oblige us to it, and run less risk of being infected by their example, or deluded by the false glare and deceitful charms, with which folly and vice are often adorned. Are not these exceeding great advantages?

Yet more, my pious hearers: the further we advance in goodness, the easier and more agreeable is the practice of it to us. The novice alone finds it hard to use restraint upon himself, to overcome the world, to make sacrifices to probity and virtue, to prefer his duty to sensual gratifications and external profit; consequently, to do things, the contrary whereof he has long been accustomed to do, and to abstain from others which he has so frequently and so willingly done. By continued exercise these hardships are gradually diminished, the courage and the abilities to combat and surmount them, are always increasing, till at last they almost entirely vanish, and it is as natural to the man to conceive good and to do good, as it formerly was perhaps to conceive evil and to do evil. But who would not be desirous of alleviating labours and occupations, which at all events he must perform, whether he find them easy or difficult? Who would not take the trouble

ble to clear a road that leads to an honourable prize, and along which he necessarily must go if he will reach that prize, of all rubs and obstructions, and render it as smooth and agreeable as he possibly can? Better would it be to bid adieu to virtue and goodness, to perfection and happiness altogether, than to render the practice and attainment of them burdensome to oneself or even utterly impossible, than to think of being satisfied with a low degree, with a small portion of them, and therefore always to stop short at the very entrance. — And the pleasure that is connected with the practice of virtue, how greatly is it increased, multiplied, heightened by the continual progress in goodness! How much more contented with himself is a man, when he fulfils his duty from inclination than when he does it from constraint, when he has done as much good as he possibly could, than when reluctantly he has scarce done so much as he was absolutely obliged to do! How satisfactory, how delightful is the consciousness of advancement, the sentiment of greater dexterity in any object of our attention! The consciousness that we have not been labouring in vain, that we have not been going retrograde, but are advanced nearer to our object! With how much greater composure of mind can a man look back upon himself and his conduct, who is daily more and more cleansing himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and farther perfecting holiness in
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the fear of God, than he who is perpetually decrying the same faults and imperfections in himself, and is obliged continually to upbraid himself with the same sins and iniquities! How much purer, sublimer joys must the exercises of devotion procure to the former, who has made himself thoroughly acquainted and conversant with them, who has so often felt the entire dignity and felicity of his fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, than to the other, to whom they are still so much stranger and consequently so much more annoying! And can love to God and man become stronger and more predominant in our hearts, without opening to us new sources of pleasure, without causing us to take a livelier interest and to feel greater satisfaction in all the good that exists and happens, that we have and that we do! And shall we allow indolence and supineness to deprive us of those satisfactions, those pleasures? Shall we think those satisfactions, those pleasures too dearly purchased by unremitted exertions after purer virtue, after higher perfection?

Consider fifthly, my pious hearers, that we cannot possibly with justice bear the title of christians, cannot worthily correspond with it, unless we exert ourselves to make continual advances in goodness. How much, my dearest friends, how much is requisite, for being altogether deserving of that glorious appellation, for answering to the obligations it imposes on us, in their utmost extent!

tent! May the christian, I would ask, content himself with an inoffensive, honest conduct, may he be satisfied with being able to say that he is not a thief, not an adulterer, not a villain? Or is it enough, that he has attained the same degree of wisdom, of virtue, of piety, which so many thousands of persons who were not christians and are not christians, have attained and still attain? Should he not of wise and good men be the wisest and best; should he not be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the model and pattern for the rest? Should he not cleanse and sanctify his interior as well as his exterior? Should not his whole life be a speaking testimony to the excellence of the doctrine that he professes? Should he not give all diligence to be perfect in love, as his father in heaven is perfect? Should he not follow Jesus Christ, his lord, by striving to become daily more like him? Should he not in a manner occupy his office among mankind by prosecuting his work on earth? Should he not even here pursue a heavenly course, or think and live in such a manner as becomes a being designed for a blessed immortality and who considers heaven as his proper country? And are these truly affairs, that we can ever so completely finish, as to leave nothing more for us to do? Is this a perfection, that is at once, that is in a short time to be attained, and so attained as that it cannot be farther increased and enhanced? Shall we ever
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be able to boast of being as like unto Jesus Christ as we could possibly become? Will the image of God, our heavenly father, ever shine so bright in us, as that it could not shine brighter in us? Must we not therefore recede from our high destination in proportion as we fail of striving to approach it?

Consider lastly, my pious hearers, that the more we here abound in the work of the Lord, the more completely and faithfully we here accomplish his will, the richer and more glorious will be the recompense, which we may expect from him hereafter. The farther we here proceed in wisdom and virtue, the greater will be our happiness in the future world. Granting, that he, who contents himself with an inferior degree of virtue and piety, who often stands still on the road of christian perfection, often stumbles, often falls, often slides backwards, and but slowly pursues his course, only half completes it; granting, that he falls not into final perdition, that he escapes the punishments of the future world, that he is transported into a better, a blessed state: how great notwithstanding will be his loss! How much less joy and glory and felicity will he hereafter reap, from his having here so parsimoniously sown? How far will he always remain behind him, who has so much more unfolded his faculties, so much more exercised his abilities, so much more faithfully and completely acquitted himself of his duty, sown so much more good seed, done so many
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more good works, run through his whole course, and finished it with unabated ardour! What will the Lord, the righteous judge, hereafter not entrust to such eminently faithful servants! Over how many others will he not place them! How much nearer will they accede to him and by him to the deity! How much greater share will they have in his power and glory! And shall not these prospects animate us to unremitted exertions after higher perfection? Shall we throw away these advantages from sheer indolence? Should this assurance, that our labour will not be in vain, ever suffer us to be weary in abounding in the work of the Lord? No; all, all conspires to encourage us to advance in goodness. Danger and difficulty on one hand, security and facility on the other; here shame, there honour; here loss, irreparable loss, there gain, infinitely multiplying gain: who then can remain in hesitation, which he should chuse, since the former awaits the indolent, the latter the indefatigable, the perennially progressive christian.

But, desire, resolution is not here enough, my pious hearers. The desire must become an effectual motive, the resolution must be matured into action, before they can render us more perfect and more happy. If ye wish in earnest, that they may become and do this, my dearest friends, use the preparatory subservient means, which reason and religion administer to you. To point out to you these

these means will employ the remainder of my discourse.

Set apart frequent portions of time, shorter or longer, for recollection, for silent meditation, for rational exercises of devotion. Without this no remarkable progress in virtue and piety is practicable. In the tumult of the world, in the perplexity of business we too easily and too far lose sight of ourselves, too frequently act without a clear consciousness of what passes within, and are too prone to admit false judgments and injurious impressions of the persons and things that surround us. In the turmoil of the world, in the embarrassments of business our spirit finds not sustenance and nourishment convenient for its nobler capacities, for its superior destination. There we are too much dazzled and deluded by outward qualities and distinctions; there we are too easily contented both as to ourselves and others with the semblance of goodness, with the first rudiments of virtue, with the lowest degree of christian righteousness. There we see before us too few models, alluring us to imitation, and in the generality of instances are too ready to be perfectly satisfied with ourselves and others. Would you then raise yourselves to excellence superior not only to the manifestly wicked, but likewise to the moderately good; frequently seek quiet and retirement. There collect your vagrant thoughts, there set your heart at rest, there im-

pose

pose silence on your passions, there turn your attention entirely on yourselves, and there give scope to reflection on those objects in which you are most interested as immortal beings and as christians, who are called to superior virtue and happiness. There indulge in lively meditations on God and your relations to him. There place full in view before you the resplendent exemplar of all human perfection, the conduct of Jesus, and the intimate and strict connections in which you stand with him, and the obligation you are under of following him by forming your mind and your life upon the model of his. There acquire a high sense of the dignity of man, the dignity of the christian; and learn to consider the present in its close combination with the future. There sometimes let your imagination convey you to your death-bed, to your grave, into the state of retribution that awaits you, and thus secure yourself against the illusions of sensible, terrestrial objects, against the various artifices of self-deceit. There bring your sentiments, your inclinations, your actions, not into comparison with what you commonly see and hear among mankind, but to the immutable standard of the laws of God, into comparison with what Jesus requires of you by his doctrine and by his example, with what the best and noblest of mankind have done and still do, with what you will hereafter wish to have done.

Let

Let farther a daily, at least a frequent recourse to self-examination be most earnestly recommended to you. How can you, without its aid, discover your failings and defects, how accurately judge of your proficiency in goodness, how perceive and avoid that which impedes and retards you? No; fail not as much as possible to pry into the inmost recesses of your heart and to see yourself as you really are. Frequently call to mind as accurately as you are able, all that you have thought of, intended, spoken, done, and omitted on some particular day, in some certain portion of time, and compare it all with your capacities and powers, with your duty, with your appointment, with your good purposes, with the perfection to which as a man and a christian you are ordained and called. This will best inform you what and how much you have ~~all~~ to correct, how and whereby you may proceed nearer to the mark of christian perfection.

Watch thirdly, if you would always abound in good, watch continually over yourself, and over all that surrounds you, and stands in connection with you. As much as possible never entirely lose sight of yourself. Accustom yourself, even in the enjoyment of social entertainments, and while you are transacting the affairs of your calling, frequently to cast a glance inwards upon your heart, and to revive the consciousness of your relations to God and mankind, the sentiment of

your dignity, the recollection of the purposes and resolutions you have formed. Let these thoughts: I am in the presence of God, he is the witness and the rewarder of my behaviour, I am a christian, a disciple of Jesus, formed for immortality, called to superior virtue and happiness, let these thoughts, like so many rays of vivid light, illuminate your mind, and penetrate your heart, discovering to you every even the most secret artifices of sin and inspiring you with courage and energy to every good word and work. Notice all the changes that happen within you, and suppress every disorderly movement, every irregular affection as it arises, that it may not shoot up into cupidity, and this cupidity degenerate into passion. Notice the several impressions made on you by outward objects, that you may shun the affairs, the persons, the companies, that might cause you to trip or prove a snare to you, and keep yourself unspotted from the world. But notice likewise the several opportunities and means, which may carry you farther in knowledge, exercise you in virtue, facilitate the practice of it, nourish and refine your devotion; and seize and employ them with fidelity and care. Allow yourself in no intentional fault, trifling as it may appear, lest it seduce you into grosser transgressions, and these again beguile you into crimes of a blacker dye. Harken to your conscience with scrupulous attention, never resist its suggestions, follow its impulses

pulses without delay, that you may not, as it were, dismiss that safest guide, that faithfullest monitor on the journey of life, by gradually forcing it to indifference, and at last reducing it to silence.

Make yourself at the same time continually more conversant with the doctrines of religion and christianity. Blend them more and more with numberless other things, with all that you see and hear and do, with your whole system of thought and apprehension, that they may present themselves spontaneously to your mind on every occasion, and come to your relief with their light and with their efficacy in all your necessities. Learn to apply them to all, even the most trivial occurrences and concerns of life, consider them always in relation to your particular circumstances and wants, and let them thus be your dearest, inseparable companions and attendants.

To conclude, adhere steadily to God, whose power is mighty in the weak. Lift up your mind and your heart frequently to him, in the tumult of society as in the stillness of solitude. Present yourself frequently and with childlike frankness at his throne of grace, and there apply for that relief and aid, which he never denies to them that earnestly implore it. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths. Yes; assuredly

the Lord will direct you right, will guide your steps as your wise and gracious parent, if you submit in true filial docility and without resistance to be guided by him. His light will enlighten you, his protection cover you, his consolation refresh you, his spirit regulate and strengthen you, the consciousness of his favour and complacency rejoice you. Under his guidance and controul you will proceed from virtue to virtue, from perfection to perfection, gain one victory after another over evil, heap one good, generous action upon another, accumulate still richer treasures for futurity, conquer all things, compass all things, finish all things, and your labour will assuredly not be in vain in the Lord.

SERMON LI.

Mankind considered as Strangers and Sojourners on Earth.

GOD, the father of all thy creatures, the father of all mankind, likewise our father, with how much wisdom and goodness dost thou lead all thy creatures and likewise us, thy children, to the goal which thou hast appointed to them and to us, to the perfection and happiness to which thou hast destined both them and us! How exactly suited is our present state to the purposes which we are here to reach! We are here to become intelligent, wise, virtuous, to love thee and all mankind, our brethren, learn to obey thee, and thereby become capable of a better life, of a superior state. And how abundant the sources of knowledge and of wisdom which thou openest to us on all sides! To what schools of virtue and of love and of obedience does thy kind providence conduct us! What lessons, what exercises, what experiences does it enable us everywhere to find! Certainly our present life is with
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all its toils and troubles that, which it ought to be, in order that we should attain to our future superior appointment ; certainly our present state is with all its limitations and weaknesses the best, in which thy paternal goodness could place us, the only one fitted for such creatures and for their gradual advancement. We are strangers and pilgrims on earth, a circumstance adapted to render our proper country dear to us and to fit us for entering into it. Oh might we then never lose sight of our destination, nor of the goal to which our pilgrimage is intended to lead us ! Might we then be continually learning to think and judge of all things and to behave towards all things, as behoves people who are not natives of this lower world, who are here only for the purposes of education and discipline and are to hasten to a heavenly home ! Might even the considerations, we are now proceeding to upon it, so acquaint us with it and so incite us to it, as to procure us lasting advantage and comfort ! Bless them then to this end, o God, and hear our prayer through Jesus Christ, in whose name we conclude our supplications, saying : Our father, &c.

1 CHRON. XXIX. 15.

We are strangers before thee, and sojourners as were all our fathers.

AS there are doctrines of wisdom and of religion, which immediately invite every man, on hearing

hearing them mentioned, to reflect upon them, and from those reflections promise him much comfort and satisfaction ; so there are others, which at first sight, from their outward appearance have nothing attractive, but rather something forbidding, and on which few persons are inclined to reflect, from the apprehension that it will make them melancholy or desponding. To the former class of religious doctrines belong, for example, those capital, comprehensive tenets : There is a God and that God is the most benign and beneficent father of mankind : there is a providence and that providence conducts and governs all for the best : there is a state of immortality and that state gives us room to expect great perfection and happiness. [What man of understanding and feeling but will readily apply the whole stress of his mind to these doctrines, willingly reflect on them, eagerly endeavour to derive satisfaction and pleasure from these copious sources of it? To the latter class of the doctrines of wisdom and religion on the other hand belong for example these : Man is dust and must again return to dust : all that is visible lasts but a short time : the world with its lusts and vanities is passing away : our days are but a span long, our lives are as nothing and are come to an end ere we have begun rightly to enjoy them : we are only strangers and sojourners here on earth. How many are startled, how many are em-

embarrassed at these doctrines! How few can hear them without shuddering, how few are disposed, and how few will venture to meditate upon them and apply them to themselves! These doctrines however are by no means so dejecting and formidable as they seem to be. They are as highly deserving of our attention and our reflection as the former, since they are no less true, no less certain, no less strictly combined with our most substantial interests, and our reflections upon them may be equally fertile in useful and soothing consequences to us. The whole of the matter depends on this, that we rightly comprehend them, that we render ourselves thoroughly conversant with them, that we consider them not as detached propositions, but as parts of an aggregate, and in their strict association with those former consoling doctrines of wisdom and religion. So will even the darkest shades relieve the light of this beautiful picture and add new graces to the whole.

Let us proceed in this manner with the interesting doctrine, my pious hearers, which is contained in our text. We are strangers and sojourners upon earth. This proposition is liable to divers misconstructions. It alarms the prosperous, and but seldom consoles the unfortunate. The consideration of it seems to promise us little pleasure and satisfaction. And yet it is a fruitful school of wisdom, and wisdom always leads her friends

friends to happiness. Let us hearken to her voice and follow her directions. We are strangers and sojourners upon earth. How and in what sense are we so? And how should we behave as such? Or, what makes us strangers and sojourners upon earth? And what is the consequence of our being such strangers and sojourners? To answer these questions and thence to learn and to teach wisdom, is the aim of my present discourse. May it be attained in all of us!

We are strangers and sojourners upon earth, not as though we werẽ here in a place ill-suited to us, for which we were not designed, or to which our creator had either exiled us as a punishment, or only sent us for a certain period without having any particular view in so doing, till he could assign us at some other time a different place in the territory of his dominion. No; this terrestrial life, however imperfect, is as much a part of our destination as the superior and heavenly life, that we expect after death. Without the former the latter would be impossible. The first stage of life leads to the second, that to the third, and each successively to a higher, and in order to ascend the last, the highest, we must have gone through the first, the lowest, and absolutely not have over-leaped any one of them. All in the creation of God is expansion, is concatenated, uninterrupted, though not always apparent progress

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to further perfection. Thus it is with the plants, thus with the animals, thus with mankind, thus assuredly likewise with the angels and all superior orders of intelligent beings. We are adapted to this earth, and this earth is adapted to us. We are here designed for certain ends, and these ends we can here attain. The surface of this globe is neither a dreary place of exile, nor the fortuitous abode of forlorn and hopeless creatures. It is the seminary of mankind and at the same time the first academy, where they are to exercise their faculties, to acquire the clear consciousness of themselves, learn the rudiments of wisdom, and raise themselves in thought to the creator.

We are further strangers and sojourners upon earth, not as though we might here seek nothing, expect nothing, esteem nothing, love nothing, be attached to nothing; not as though we should be as careless and indifferent to all the objects around us, and take as little interest in them, as travellers and strangers are wont to do in the several places of their short sojourn. The universe of God is even in that part which is destined to the residence and education of mankind, in the sphere of sight and action assigned them, so replete with wonders of sovereign wisdom and goodness which glare before our eyes, and contains so many satisfactions, pleasures and goods of such various kinds, inviting us to enjoyment, that we must be no less insensible than ungrateful,

ful, not to be affected at all by them, not to be interested about the possession and enjoyment of those objects, to be totally unconcerned at their loss, and to find neither complacency nor pleasure in the beautiful and good that present and offer themselves to us on all sides. And how could we otherwise expand and exercise our intellectual faculties, how form our taste, how nourish and heighten the sensibility of our heart, how fit and qualify ourselves for greater things? No; admire, seek, love, enjoy all, rejoice in all that beautifies this your first abode, that alleviates and sweetens to you this terrestrial life; it is the work and benefaction of God, your heavenly father: you can do all this as strangers and sojourners if only you take care not to lose sight of that better and more beautiful, whereunto that which is here below is designed to conduct and prepare you.

We are in short strangers and sojourners upon earth, not as though we here were only to be obnoxious to toils, troubles and sorrows, as though we were here incapable of real happiness, as though all that is so called subsisted nowhere but in the imagination, or as though we here could enjoy happiness merely in hope, in agreeable prospects in futurity. No; he dishonours God, the creator and father of us and of the whole universe, he belies his own feelings and the feelings of so many millions of persons, who pretends

pretends that all is darkness here and no light, that this world is one continued scene of misery and tears, that he can find and enjoy no pleasure and no happiness either in or out of himself; and whoever imagines, that, as a stranger or sojourner upon earth, he should so think and judge of the present state of mankind, misapprehends the true nature of those relations, and associates in his idea things that have no necessary consociation. Even the pilgrim, the stranger, may warrantably enjoy pleasure and happiness on his journey if only he neither forgets nor fools away the still loftier pleasure, the still purer and more durable happiness that awaits him in his native land.

No, my pious hearers, the scripture in designating us as strangers and sojourners upon earth never intended to convey to our minds such joyless, melancholy ideas of our present state, is far from pronouncing us such insignificant, and wretched, and making of us such insensible, indifferent beings born to be always reasonably complaining of wants and misery. No; this metaphorical figure, which has so frequently been depicted in the darkest colours and therefore so often abused, is only designed to inform us of the transitory, evanescent nature of terrestrial objects and of our relations and habitudes to them, and at the same time to confirm us in the devout expectation of a better and more perfect state. Let

us expatiate upon this subject a little more at large.

We are strangers and sojourners upon earth, seeing we have here no inheritance in the strictest import of the expression, since we possess nothing, on the possession whereof we can safely rely. All that we have, that we acquire, that we call ours : how liable to revolutions, to vicissitude ! How soon, how entirely, and in how many various ways may we lose it ! We have houses, palaces, lands, goods, privileges, possessions of sundry kinds ; but how suddenly may they become a prey to all-devouring flames, how quickly be destroyed by irresistible inundations, by the ravages of war, by injustice and violence, by oppression and rapine, by a thousand unavoidable accidents ! — We have friends, relations, those whom love cements to us in holy faith, whom we call ours, and who are so intimately united with us, that we consider them a part of ourselves : but even these ties, the closest and happiest of all, are by no means indissoluble, even they are often loosened by distance and various mischances, and at last rent asunder by death. And thus it is with all external things ; thus it is even with our internal endowments, with our mental faculties, thus it is with our very lives. All is subject to inconstancy and change, all lasts but a short time. Riches and poverty, plenty and want, superiority and inferiority, splendor and obscurity, strength and weakness, health and sickness, sounds of mirth and joyless
silence

silence, life and death succeed one another, now more rapidly, now more tardily, in innumerable forms, take up their abode now here, now there, pass in a never ending circulation from the hand of one owner into that of another; and anyone who should rely on these things, should in full security reckon upon them, would act as foolishly as the stranger, the pilgrim, who should reckon that his own property and arbitrarily dispose of it which was only lent him for use and accommodation on his journey. No; they are so many loans, goods entrusted to our keeping, which we may and ought to use, to enjoy, but which are not properly our own, belonging solely to him who lent them to us for a longer or a shorter time, and whose property they are as well as we ourselves.

We are strangers and sojourners upon earth; that is further, we cannot here attain the whole of our destination, cannot be and become all that, according to the constitution and capacities of our nature and according to the intention of our creator and governour, we are designed to be and to become. We only approach nearer by this terrestrial life to our proper and superior destination. We here only begin to unfold our capacities, to exercise our faculties, to do good and to enjoy good. That which we here are and do and enjoy, is indeed suited to our present state, is in itself and independently of its consequences
good

good and desirable, is in its kind real perfection and happiness : but it is not consummate perfection and happiness, it is not absolutely the best and most desirable, of which we are capable ; and that which we here are and do and enjoy, is not all that in general we can be and do and enjoy, it is not the ultimate aim, not the highest stage of our existence, but only motive and means and preparation, for making nearer advances to it. We learn here to think, we here accumulate knowledge, we acquire good aptnesses here, we here operate in a particular orbit, we enjoy here certain goods and pleasures : but we have capacities and powers within us, for thinking still more justly, for comprehending still more with our thoughts, for acquiring still more extensive knowledge and deeper intuitions, for acquiring still better aptnesses, for operating in a still larger orbit with still better effects, for enjoying still nobler goods and purer pleasures ; and what we here do in all these respects, is intended only to school and fit us for that which we are destined to do in a higher state. The stranger, the pilgrim travels not merely for the sake of travelling, gains particular information concerning whatever he sees and hears that is curious in his journey, not merely for the sake of gaining information about it, or for knowing it, makes not new acquaintances merely for the sake of having made them, he does all this in particular views, he intends

tends hereafter to make use of it, his design is to avail himself in various ways of what he has learnt and done, in prosecuting the affairs and transactions that await him at the end of his travels. And such is the conduct of the wise man and the christian, who takes this life for what it is, and considers himself only as a stranger and sojourner here.

We are strangers and sojourners upon earth : this reminds us thirdly, that we cannot here find all that we wish for and require, and what in itself may be good and desirable, but that alone which is proper for this station and for our present constitution. The stranger, the pilgrim is well aware that he must do without many things, must not require, not expect many things, which he has in abundance at the place of his destination, or might with the best right expect and require. Every place, every state has its peculiar satisfactions and advantages, but likewise its peculiar limitations and inconveniencies. Thus also it is with our present abode, with our terrestrial state, we here find not all that our curious and inquisitive mind is continually in quest of, not all after which our ever restless heart is panting, or we find it not in that degree and in that measure which we could wish. So we here find opportunity and excitement to exercise our faculties, and in a larger or narrower sphere to do good : but in the exercise of our faculties we frequently

quently meet with insuperable obstacles, they are sometimes exhausted by the slightest exertion, and seldom can we do in the province allotted us so much good and for so long a time, as we could wish, or extend it commensurately with our inward impulse to activity. We here find pleasure, but no pleasure that is intirely pure and unalloyed, that never draws after it either lassitude or satiety. We here find happiness, but no happiness, that satisfies all our appetites, that completely fills our soul, that is uninterrupted in its duration, and not subject to casualty or change in its enjoyment. He who requires this, forgets that he is a stranger and sojourner upon earth, he requires somewhat that is incompatible with the settlement and condition of our present state.

We are strangers and sojourners upon earth; that is, fourthly: we are not appointed in perpetuity to this terrestrial life. This earth is not our fixt and permanent dwelling place; it is rather designed for the lodging, for the protection, for the refreshment, for the information of travellers on their journey than for proper landlords and inhabitants. Our abode on it is of very short duration: sooner or later we must quit it with all its goods and satisfactions and delights, sooner or later the relations in which we stand to outward, visible objects cease; they are to us and we to them no longer that, which we correlatively were.

Quickly is this first scene of our existence over. To be and to die, to make our entrances on the stage and then our exits, to come into light and to retreat into the darkness of the grave — how rapidly the one follows on the other ! And the time when this our pilgrimage shall come to an end, is extremely uncertain : always short, it may however be abridged in numberless ways, and is always far sooner come, than we were aware. It depends entirely on the will of our sovereign, on whose behests we travel, whose purposes we are to promote in this province of his domain, and who perhaps to-day, perhaps tomorrow will recall us. Surely he who thinks to settle here, to remain here, he who attaches himself with all his heart to that, which he here has and does, forgets that he is a stranger and sojourner upon earth, he thinks and behaves in such a manner as is by no means consistent with his character and his situation.

We are strangers and sojourners upon earth ; that is lastly : we have a country, to which we are bound and in which alone we shall reach our destination. We are proceeding to a state, that is more permanent and far better than the present ; an abode awaits us of greater durability and constancy, where we may longer and more completely rejoice in our existence ; a happiness which is subject to fewer vicissitudes, on the possession and enjoyment whereof we may far more safely rely.

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Every stranger has somewhere a home, every traveller has a place to which he is bound. So likewise we, my dear friends. Our country is there, where Jesus Christ resides, where all the wise and good assemble round him and eat the fruit of his love and their works. Our future dwelling is not earthly, not transitory, but heavenly and undecaying; 'not a hut,' affording harbour to the wayfaring man for a few days or hours, and which he leaves again by break of day, but a proper home, where we may live and dwell and abide. Our future happiness is not an interchange of light and darkness, not a perpetual conflict between desirable and adverse events, between enjoyment and want. It is in continual increase, like daylight when the golden morn ascends, always rising higher, always growing brighter and more resplendent, and to which no night succeeds. Then are we at the place where we would be, and forget all the hardships and troubles of our past journey. Then we practise what we learnt here, apply the good qualities which we acquired here, follow the occupations for which we fitted ourselves here, and enjoy the goods and felicities which we here have learnt to understand and to aspire after and to enjoy. Yes; whoever in all respects here thinks and lives as a stranger and sojourner, may assuredly promise himself this glorious termination of his pilgrimage, and to him must even the character, which he here bears and the state

in which he here finds himself, if he consider both in their connection with the future, contain far more of the consolatory and cheering than of the anxious and sorrowful.

If we then, my pious hearers, are such strangers and sojourners upon earth, what is the consequence? How ought we to behave? Hear, my beloved fellow-travellers on the road to the celestial city, what instructions and precepts wisdom imparts to us in this behalf.

Are ye strangers and sojourners upon earth, she says; then seek, expect nothing here, that is not here to be found. Seek and expect therefore here no joys, no pleasures, that are suited only to a superior life, to a more perfect state, to angelic minds, to intelligences of a superior order; no joys, no pleasures, that presuppose other capacities, other kinds of knowledge, other outward circumstances, other wants, other connections with the visible or with the spiritual world. No, seek and expect here only such joys, only such pleasures as are suited to this world, to this state of human infancy, to this elementary school of wisdom and virtue; only such joys, only such pleasures, to which our present horizon and field of action, to which the world around us, the creatures in it, the affairs we have to manage, afford us matter and occasion. Accept, enjoy these satisfactions and pleasures, as they are, and as long as they are innocent enjoy them with a glad-
some

some heart. Beware of that unhappy sagacity of the discontented and morose, who, amid all the beautiful and good that they have and behold and enjoy, are ever spying out flaws, imperfections, defects and disorder. Act not so preposterously as to abate and embitter your enjoyment of the satisfactions of this life, by continually holding them up against the brilliant images of perfection which fancy or affection may create, and by despising or rejecting the good, the beautiful, the agreeable that offers itself to you, because perhaps in different conjunctures, in a different state, it might be still better and more beautiful and more agreeable. No; the idea of those purer delights, of those sublimer pleasures, which ye justly expect, — should rather elevate your taste for the suavities of this life, and teach you to enjoy them, not with a less glad and grateful sentiment of the divine bounty, but with greater prudence and moderation.

Are ye strangers and sojourners upon earth, farther says wisdom to you; then be not surprised, be not troubled at anything which is a natural consequence of your present condition, which is inseparable from the pilgrim-life which you now lead. The traveller wishes indeed for a bright sky, mild weather, an easy and safe road for the prosecution of his journey; he wishes to meet with good company, commodious lodging, various accommodations on his way. But if he must do without these advantages, if the clouds gather, the heavens

heavens become lurid, the weather grows stormy, the road is rough and dangerous, if he is obliged to proceed cautiously alone, to endure cold and heat, and frequently in vain to look long about for shelter and refreshment, he is not at all surprised at it, he does not complain of it, as if something novel and extraordinary had befallen him, as if some injury was done him. He knew before, that this is the common lot of travellers, he had previously made up his mind to it, and if he experiences but few of these dangers and hardships, he esteems himself highly fortunate. Think and act in like manner, you my brethren, who are hastening together with me as strangers and sojourners through the wilderness of this world to the place of your destination. Ye cannot pass along the road that leads to it without any troubles, without any dangers, without contending with any difficulties. Only pleasant days, only favourable circumstances, only fine prospects, only liberal, obliging, affable companions, ye cannot reasonably expect on your journey thither. But ye may safely reckon upon a frequent vicissitude of good and bad days, of prosperous and adverse occurrences, of a greater and smaller proportion of light, of faster and slower progress, of better and worse companions, and this ye should always calculate upon ; neither should it at all surprise you, if ye consider yourselves as strangers and pilgrims, who have here no permanent dwelling,

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but have before them a glorious object, the attainment whereof will more than remunerate them.

Beware only, and it is the third instruction which wisdom gives us on this head, beware only of rendering your pilgrimage still more laborious by avoidable deviations and mistakes, and the road to your country still more uneven and perilous by a wilful augmentation of the giddy footings and obstructions upon it. We must at all events have obstacles to surmount on our way, difficulties to encounter, temptations and dangers to overcome, in order to arrive as conquerors at the goal, and in these we shall never be wanting. But only those obstacles and difficulties and temptations and dangers can we courageously encounter, that come upon us without any blameable cause in ourselves, from the natural condition and settlement of things. Providence, which has laid them in our way for our trial and exercise, will certainly enable us to surmount and vanquish them. It has accurately balanced resistance and force in the moral as in the physical world. Whoever loiters on the road that God has assigned him, as deeming the end of it unattainable, certainly renders that road more laborious and dangerous to him than it was before, and needs to be. Beware of this, all ye, who would walk securely and not fail of reaching the prize. Augment not the unavoidable obstacles and difficulties which ye meet on your way by wilful sins, by a criminal waste of your powers, by purposely wounding

wounding your conscience and the consequent loss of your inward peace. Augment them not by levity, by thoughtlessness, by excessive dissipation or too constant application to business. Augment them not by turning aside now to the right, then to the left from the path you have once begun, by stopping first at this, then at the other frivolous object, and thus losing the time and vigour and courage necessary for pursuing your course. Avoid all indirect and tortuous paths. Even the most inviting, flowery deflection leads you away from the goal; even the easiest, pleasantest, circuitous road impedes your progress. Only on the direct, the nearest way can we make no step in vain.

Are ye strangers and sojourners upon earth, my pious hearers; reckon fourthly your present state always what it really is, and use it always to the purposes for which it is designed. It is not the term, but the way to the term; it is not the ultimate aim, but the means subordinate to the attainment of it; not the state of enjoyment, but preparation for enjoyment; not the most perfect mode of existence and of life, whereof ye are capable, but only the first, the lowest stage of it. Here your heavenly father purposes to educate you for a superior life, to train you up to more important occupations, to prepare you for greater felicities. Oh resist not the affectionate discipline of your best, your kindest parent. Prescribe not
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to him, how he shall guide and conduct you, by what methods he shall lead you nearer to perfection, but profit by all his proceedings to your improvement. He is intimately acquainted with all his children, knows best what is proper for each of them, educates each of them according to his specific wants and capacities, and demands from none anything more than docility and obedience. Every way which he calls us to go, infallibly leads to the goal, whether it be rough or plain, brighter or darker ; every business he commissions us to transact, every pleasure he accords us, every calamity that he inflicts upon us, are so many means conducive to higher perfection. All are calculated for our instruction and discipline, and to render us wiser and better. Oh apply them to that purpose. Never deem yourselves wise and good enough, never suppose that ye have learnt all and done all that ye here may learn and do, never abandon yourselves to an indolent, inactive repose, never cease from urging forwards and pressing farther, so long as ye are pilgrims, so long as ye are not yet at the end of your career.

Finally therefore never lose sight of that object. Never be unmindful of your better, celestial country. Consider, judge, suffer, do and enjoy all in reference to it. Rejoice by anticipation in its benefits and prerogatives. Be constantly preparing yourselves more sedulously for an entrance into it. Make yourselves continually more conver-

sant with the sentiments, dispositions, occupations, pleasures of the place. Let those ravishing prospects invigorate, comfort, encourage you, render you intrepid in every danger and unwearied in well-doing. Often revolve in your mind: here I am a pilgrim, but a pilgrim who has before him a stated object and is approaching nearer it at every step. I am here a stranger, but a stranger that has a country, and in his country may hope for an ample compensation for every present privation and deficiency. Here both my outward and inward condition are subject to various vicissitudes ; light and darkness, joys and sorrows are here variously intermingled, and thus must it ever be, if I am to be tutored and trained and qualified for higher concerns. No ; all that brings me nearer to my proper country ; all that renders me more qualified for its delights and privileges, more capable of filling my station in it, and worthier of the company and converse of my intelligent countrymen and of our common leader and chieftain Jesus Christ : all shall be right welcome to me ; shall be felicity to me, how gloomy soever its outward aspect be, how disagreeable soever its first impressions on me. Soon shall I be through the remainder of the journey ! Soon shall I reach the prize ! And how invaluable that prize ! What glories await me at the goal ! What solace after the fatigues of my journey ! What repose after my toils ! What a triumph after my conflicts !

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What a harvest from what I have sown on earth! What endless, blissful increase in knowledge, in wisdom, in virtue, in activity, in joy, in happiness! Who with such prospects, with such expectations, can be weary and languid on his course! Who does not find himself forced to exclaim with the apostle: Forgetting those things which are behind, I hasten with redoubled ardour, with a steady view, I reach forth, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ, for the victor's crown, which shines full in view before me at the end of the course, and which the sovereign judge and rewarder of all good, will infallibly award to me, if I be found faithful before him. Yes, faithful, my dearest friends, to be found faithful before God, be that our glory and our most zealous pursuit, and then the termination of our earthly pilgrimage cannot fail of being supremely desirable and blessed.

SERMON LII.

The Duty of Brotherly Correctic

GOD, who art the father of us and of all mankind, we embrace with cordial benevolence all our brethren of every rank and condition and wheresoever dispersed over the face of the earth. We know that thou lovest and providest for them all, that thou judgest and treatest them with equity and mercy; and this quiets our minds concerning their present and future portion. They are not indeed all so happy as we are; all are not favoured with that clear light by which we are guided to the knowledge of truth and on the way to supreme felicity; all are not gladdened with that hope and consolation with which thy gospel rejoices us; all are not blessed with so many accommodations and satisfactions of life, so much instruction and means of improvement as we enjoy. Thy thoughts, o God, are indeed far above our thoughts, thy ways far above our ways. Thou alone intuitively perceivest the whole,

whole, the past, the present and the future, combining eternity with time in thy almighty mind, and withal lookest through and through all the dark corners of the soul of man, all the windings and turnings and various workings of his faculties. Thy government is therefore supremely wise, supremely gracious, it is irreproachable: in this faith we sincerely rejoice; even when we cannot fathom its decrees nor discern its views. Hereafter shall we and all thy rational dependants extol thy righteousness and grace, and worship thee on evidently known principles, as the wisest ruler, as the most gracious father of mankind. — In the mean time, we desire — and this desire cannot be displeasing to thee, the All-bountiful, — we heartily desire that all our brethren may fare well and ever better that knowledge and wisdom, integrity and virtue, comfort and happiness may every way more abound and flourish among them; that they may still better learn to use the various means of instruction, of correction and discipline which thou impartest to them, and thus be capable of still higher perfection! — We desire and pray, O merciful God, that thou wouldst lead the ignorant to knowledge, the vicious to the way of amendment, and the slaves of their lusts and passions to real liberty; that thou wouldst refresh the sorrowful with consolation, the wretched with relief, the sick with patience and resignation, the dying

dying with the hopes of a better life ! We desire that we and all our brethren, whether high or low, rich or poor, in health or in sickness, in prosperity or in adversity, that we may all faithfully fulfil the duties of our several stations and callings; employ the capacities and endowments which thou hast entrusted to us, according to thy will; worthily occupy the place which thou hast allotted us in thy dominion, and thus may become capable of receiving more and nobler possessions, and hereafter of filling superior stations in the world to come ! Assist us with thy grace and with the influences of thy holy spirit, through Jesus Christ, our blessed saviour, who has instructed us to address thee thus : Our father, &c.

I THESSAL. V. 14.

We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.

CHRISTIANITY enjoins us several duties which seem to have slipped almost entirely out of notice, and are daily contravened without reproach or even observation, upon the groundless supposition that they are only binding on particular persons, and not of universal obligation. Thus every christian is bound, in proportion to his capacity and opportunities, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the erroneous, to comfort the afflicted, to visit the sick, and to assist them according to his means. He is especially obliged

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to contribute, to the utmost of his ability, to the propagation and advancement of truth, of godliness and virtue. The precepts and injunctions of this nature, which we meet with in holy scripture, are addressed to all the confessors of Jesus, without distinction of ranks and conditions of life; and the reasons on which these injunctions are inculcated are of equal validity and force to every christian. But how seldom are these obligations thought of! How little pains are taken to correspond with them! What is more common than to neglect them, as if they were obligatory only on those who have devoted themselves to the clerical office. This is precisely the case with the important duty recommended to us in the text: We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, or rebuke such as will not be submissive to order, who lead a disorderly life, at variance with the laws of christianity. No person doubts, that rulers and magistrates, preachers and preceptors, parents and guardians, are authorized and enjoined to admonish their subjects or clients, their hearers, their children and wards, of their trespasses and failings, and to exhort them to amendment. But here in general we stop. Further than this we do not extend that important duty, which nevertheless is of so large a compass. We forget that it is of universal obligation, and that we all, as men and as christians, are reciprocally bound to admonish, to rebuke and to caution

tion each other respecting sins and iniquities ; and thus to promote our present and future happiness. But the more this duty is neglected, and the greater the mischief that arises from that neglect, or the defective observance of it ; the less unprofitable, or superfluous, my friends, will be the instruction I now mean to deliver to you on the subject of brotherly correction. In this view two particulars will employ our attention. In the former, I shall state the necessity of brotherly correction, or prove that it is our bounden duty. In the other, I shall shew how this correction is to be administered, as well as how it is to be taken.

Brotherly correction is necessary, and it is a duty, because God in his word has expressly commanded it ; because it is an essential ingredient in the love of our neighbour ; because by it we consult our own profit, as we draw upon ourselves the greatest injury by the omission of it.

I say first, brotherly correction is necessary, and our bounden duty, because God has expressly commanded it in his word. Thus he says by Moses : Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart : thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. And how numerous and reiterated, how plain, how express are the instructions on this head, given us by the apostles of our Lord : Exhort one another daily,
says

says saint Paul, while it is called to-day ; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. If a man be overtaken in a fault, says the same apostle to the Galatians, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Have no fellowship, says he to the christians at Ephesus, with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them ; and in our text we hear him saying, We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly. How then can we, without being guilty of the most glaring disobedience to God, neglect a duty which is so frequently and so expressly inculcated upon us ?

Brotherly correction is further necessary, and a duty incumbent upon us, because it is essential to the love of our neighbour, which is the grand commandment of the christian law. You know, my friends, how forcibly the love of one another is inculcated upon christians, and how much it comprehends. “ He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” By this shall all men know, says our saviour, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. We should, according to the precept of the apostle John, not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. This, says the blessed Jesus, is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. But what is the signification

of loving our neighbour, unless it be heartily to desire his happiness, and to strive to promote it to the utmost of our power? But is not his happiness principally founded on the regular and devout frame of his heart and his conduct? Can we therefore earnestly desire his happiness, and actually strive to promote it, if we allow him to proceed on the way of sin and vice, which must necessarily bring him to misery, without admonition and warning? And how did Christ evince his love to mankind, which is to be the model of ours? Did he content himself with feeding the hungry, with giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and life to the dead? No; he instructed the ignorant, he sought the wanderers, he went after the lost, to bring them to better courses; he reproved the sinful, he called them to repentance, and employed all methods for their conversion and salvation. Would we then follow his example, or, which is the same thing, would we rightfully bear the name of christians: we must not only consult the bodily, but also the spiritual welfare of our neighbour. We must not only care for his terrestrial, but also for his eternal happiness. We should not only warn him of the dangers that menace his property, his honour, his life, but much rather of the peril into which sin and wickedness are casting him. We should strive to rescue his immortal soul, and to snatch him from
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everlasting perdition. But how can we do this, if we permit him quietly and uninterruptedly to follow his corrupt affections, if we omit to reprove him for his transgressions, and to endeavour by all means to restore him to reason?

Brotherly correction is thirdly necessary, and an indispensable duty, because we ourselves receive various and considerable advantages from it, which our self-love should induce us to seek. We cannot labour properly at the salvation of our brother, without at the same time advancing our own. While we remind him of his duty, while we represent to him the ignominy and the mischief of vice, and strive to convince him of the propriety, the necessity and beauty of virtue, we are confirming ourselves in the hatred of evil and the love of good; and we thence acquire new motives for sedulously avoiding that, and for prosecuting this with renovated ardour. If we prove ourselves in this respect the sincere friends of our neighbour, we may always, in similar cases, expect the same proofs of friendship from others. They will set us right if we are going wrong; they will shew us the faults which our vanity conceals; if we begin to grow negligent and remiss, they will rouse and encourage us to a resolute prosecution of our virtuous course. And where is the man that is not often in need of this help? Should we then hesitate to act by others, as we would wish them to act by us? If

we are so happy as to find that our remonstrances and corrections obtain a hearing; how much shall we be thanked by him whom we have thus reformed! Rebuke a wise man, says Solomon, and he will love thee. Again, He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue. Nay, what a glorious recompense may we not hope for from heaven, if we faithfully comply with this duty! God, as the apostle tells us, is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love. How then can he forget this work, which as far transcends all other kinds of good works as the soul excels the body, as eternity is superior to time? Shall even a draught of cold water that is given to a christian out of christian charity, go unrewarded? Then what reward has he not to expect, who sincerely and earnestly endeavours to bring an erring fellow-creature to the knowledge of truth, or conducts a sinner to the way of righteousness! Hear, what stress is laid upon this duty by St. James. He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins. Can we then, unless we hate ourselves, hesitate to fulfill a duty which not only is so noble and excellent in itself, but is attended with so many blessed effects?

Brotherly correction is lastly necessary, and an indispensable duty, because we cannot neglect it, without

without burdening ourselves with the heaviest penalty. Is he who leaves the hungry to die, without affording him relief, in all equity accounted a murderer; how much rather does he deserve that appellation, who sees as it were his brother on the brink of an abyss, on the verge of eternal perdition, without giving him warning, or snatching him from it! Does he who converts a sinner from the error of his ways, deliver a soul from death; then he who does it not when he has it in his power, is chargeable in all reason with being accessary to his ruin. What a crime in the sight of heaven! We have heard it already from the mouth of God: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. And what God says to the prophets with reference to the people at large, whose teachers they are, relates in a certain sense to every person respecting his friends, his acquaintance and relations. O son of man, I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel. O thou father of a family, may the same thing be justly said, I have set thee a watchman over thy children and dependants. O man, I have established thee a watchman over the persons with whom thou art connected. Thou shalt warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that

that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. How important, my friends, how sacred must that duty be, to the omission whereof such penalties are annexed! After all this, can we have the least doubt that we are strictly bound to the discharge of this duty?

But how, you may probably say, how are we to perform it? How are we to surmount the obstacles that stand in the way of it? I will give you some rules for your behaviour in this respect, the observance whereof will infallibly afford you facilities in the business. I will first shew you how we are to correct others, and afterwards how we are to accept the corrections of others.

Our reprehensions should before all things be well grounded. We should carefully beware of making a man such reproaches as he does not deserve, or of charging him with faults and inadvertencies from which he is free. Neither are we to reprove him for things that are not bad in themselves, but are indifferent and lawful, though they may not perhaps coincide with our opinions and our inclinations. This would rather betray an improper and petulant disposition to spy out defects, than an earnest desire of improving our neighbour; we should thus become suspected, and scarce find a hearing when our reproofs were well founded and important. We should here however observe two things. We may

may be doubtful whether such a person has committed this or the other fault. In that case, we should not indeed absolutely accuse him of it ; but we may give him to understand the uneasiness this uncertainty creates in our minds on his account, and the wish that we may find it destitute of foundation. And even where no direct rebuke is admissible, affectionate warnings and intreaties may be used with advantage. Again, things which are indifferent in themselves may cease to be so, when we fail of observing a proper moderation in their behalf. The most innocent entertainments become sinful, when we are too vehemently addicted to them, when we have so habituated ourselves to them, that we can scarcely do without them, or when we neglect our duty for their sake. To this head belong dress, play, company, the reading of such books as tend more to amusement than instruction and information, and the like. Must not brotherly reprehension then be likewise necessary and profitable with regard to such things? A young man, for instance, keeps himself clear of all those youthful extravagances which tend to injure his reputation, his health and his future prosperity. He frequents no companies where the rules of sobriety and good-manners are ever infringed, where religion and virtue are ridiculed. None can properly say that he does any harm. But neither can it be affirmed that he

he does any good. He is employed in mere trifles and frivolities from morning to night, and the best years of his life pass away unimproved. What a happiness would it be for him, if he had a friend, to remind him of the true end of his being, represent to him the danger of such a thoughtless and sauntering life, the great value of time, the importance of the human soul, and endeavour to convince him that it is as criminal to neglect the good we may and ought to do, as to commit the evil we ought to avoid! What a happiness, if his friend should affectionately reprove him for the apathy and indifference with which he views the most interesting concerns, for the carelessness with which he treats his everlasting salvation and his future account!

In order to obtain a hearing to our reprehensions, and for rendering them of real utility; we should secondly be free from those faults which we reprehend in others. I mean not to say, that we may not undertake this duty, till we are blameless in all respects ourselves, and have reached the utmost pinnacle of holiness. If that were made the condition; we should never comply with this duty while we remain upon earth. For, "who can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from all sin?" "In many things we offend all." But there is a vast difference between slips which a man rarely makes, faults which he never commits but from surprise,
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against his inclination, and to his extreme regret, and those which a man daily and deliberately runs into, which he commits knowingly and wilfully, to which he is prone, to which he readily submits. These, and not the former, disqualify us for admonishing our neighbour of his trespasses, and reproving him for them. At least, in the generality of cases, they deprive our reproof of all its weight, and render it entirely fruitless. For how inconsistent would it be for the proud to pretend to be zealous against haughtiness and vanity, for the avaricious to inveigh against an inordinate love of worldly goods, for the voluptuary to recommend temperance, and to warn us to avoid the lusts of the flesh, for the irascible and vindictive to preach up meekness and forbearance! How much must the conduct of such persons enervate the force of their reproof, though it were never so solidly founded! Would they not, thus will the majority of mankind conclude, would they not themselves avoid those errors and vices, if they actually thought them so dangerous and hurtful as they allege them to be? To this purpose our saviour says: How wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. How-

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ever there are circumstances, where we may reprove with propriety and utility, the very faults in others which we have in ourselves. If we acknowledge and bewail our misdoings, if we sigh under the burden of their baleful effects, if we are sincerely resolved to forsake them, and if we actually take pains to amend; then, from our own dreadful experience, we may derive the strongest motives for warning others of the same, and for encouraging others, as well as ourselves, to maintain the conflict against them. This should particularly be, when the faults are such as we have committed in company with others, or have furnished them with instigation and opportunity to commit them.

Brotherly admonitions and corrections should thirdly be administered in a friendly and affectionate manner, if we would have them to be useful. A sincere and hearty desire to promote the welfare of our neighbour, should be both their origin and their rule. If we are urged by christian charity to reprove our erring and straying brother, we shall not so much endeavour to shame, to confound and to vex him, as to awaken him to amendment, and to snatch him from the danger or misfortune into which he is likely to fall. We shall not hold up his faults to him in a jeering and taunting manner, but avoid whatever may excite in him anger or displeasure. Our mien, the tone of our voice, our whole

whole deportment towards him will betray no secret joy at his frailties, no pride on account of our superior virtue, but evince a tender compassion and unaffected modesty. We shall not proceed as if we wanted to draw out all the circumstances of the bad deed he has done, or the bad habits he has contracted, for satisfying a froward curiosity, but so as to bring him to reflect on his moral condition and to the knowledge of himself. We shall first endeavour to win his affection, to remove whatever prejudice he may have conceived against us, ere we set about convincing him of the criminality of his conduct, and inducing him by the force of our arguments to alter it. We shall give him to know how great an interest we take in his welfare; how ardently we wish him both present and future felicity; how nearly it goes to our heart when we see him do or omit anything that has a tendency to impede it, that may draw upon him contempt, ignominy, vexation, or, which is more than all, the displeasure of the supreme being. These dispositions will not allow us to reprimand him in an authoritative tone, or in harsh and contemptuous terms. Friendship and mild persuasion will accompany each remonstrance; and we shall not appeal to ourselves, but to the nature of the case itself, and to the convincing arguments of reason and religion. The same dispositions will teach us also

gentleness

gentleness and moderation. We shall carefully shun all that petulance and asperity which in most cases would render our endeavours unavailing, and shall answer every objection and cavil of him whom we reprove with calmness and composure. In a word, if we are actuated by the real love of our neighbour, we shall not suffer ourselves to be intimidated by the first unsuccessful attempts. We shall frequently return to the charge unwearied, and comfort ourselves with the hope that probably, at another time, and in other circumstances, our expostulations may produce better effects. In this respect we have the precept of an apostle: Count him [whom you reprove] not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.

Brotherly correction should fourthly be administered seasonably and with discretion, in order to be profitable. It is by no means indifferent, my friends, when and in what conjunctures we admonish another of his faults, and urge him to reform. If we reprove our friend in the presence of persons with whom he is in habits of intimacy, on whose taciturnity he cannot rely, or who are wont to judge with rigour, and whose friendship and esteem may be easily lost; in that case we shall hardly reach our aim. We may indeed shame and confound, but probably not correct him. It is far more likely that we shall furnish
him

him with an opportunity, either for denying the faults which in other circumstances he would perhaps have confessed and lamented, or for palliating and justifying them by every kind of evasion; and he will now endeavour to conceal his past transgressions by an accumulation of more, namely of subterfuges, prevarications and lyes. Just as little, nay still less may we hope to succeed, if we take him under any vehement agitation of mind. The most solemn truths we may then present to him, will make little or no impression on his heart, because the man is bewildered by passion, and every object appears to him through a false medium. We should now treat him as a person labouring under a disease, who has not the command of himself, and cannot hearken to any reasonable remonstrances, but will probably be more enraged by them, till the heat of his fever be allayed, and reason resume her seat. I would not be understood as if in such cases we were to be wholly indifferent and supine. We may and should intimate our displeasure at the transports our acquaintance or our friend allows himself in; we may make him perceive our compassion at the disordered and furious condition in which we find him, and our fears of the dangerous effects it may have; we may strive to soften and melt his heart by affectionate and repeated intreaties, by tender demonstrations of friendship, or turn his attention to different topics, and thereby divert him
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from his rage. We may even between whiles remind him in few but emphatical words of some impressive declaration of scripture; and the more affecting, the more unexpected it is, the more likely it will be to break the association of his wild ideas, give a shock to his mind, and like a flash of lightning dispel the mist that surrounds it. Generally however in such cases gentleness is to be preferred to severity, and all possible circumspection should be used; though, if it be parents that have to do with their children, or superiors with their inferiors, it may often happen that the respect and legitimate authority of the one may be capable of curbing the passions of the other, by somewhat harsher measures, and impose a more powerful restraint on the impetuosity of their temper.

If you would acquit yourselves, pious hearers, of the duty we are now recommending, in the fittest and most favourable conjunctures, watch for a time when your acquaintance, your friend, is in the calm and quiet possession of himself; when you see him inclined and disposed to seriousness, to reflection, to continued meditation; when you perceive that the doctrines of religion, or particular contingences and events, have made a proper impression on him, and have opened access to his mind for the voice of truth and conscience. Ply him then, when he is sensible to the value of your friendship, and converses with
you

you in the simplicity of his heart ; or when, humbled by some malady, by the loss of something that was dear to him, by other adversities, he is forcibly reminded of the vanity of all earthly things ; or even when he has received some peculiar benefits or blessings from the hand of God, and enjoys with gladness the tokens of his benignity. Then strive to call his attention to what are most conducive to his real welfare and to his moral improvement. Then lay before him his manifold obligations both to God and to mankind ; represent to him the errors of his former deportment ; and employ every effort to move him to a salutary remorse, and to reclaim him from his follies : so will your endeavours, under the blessing of God, if not always, yet certainly in very many instances, be attended with the most desirable effects.

You apprehend now, pious hearers, in what method we are to rebuke our brethren, if we would do them real service, and act up to our duty. Nothing more remains, than briefly to present you with a few rules in what manner you should accept the reproofs you meet with yourselves, how you are to regard and to use them.

The first rule is this : Accept them with meekness, with a composed and quiet mind. Beware of taking that for an affront, which in fact is the strongest proof of real friendship. Be not angry with him who reminds you of your errors and
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trèspasses. Consider, that it is his duty to do so, and that, by the neglect of it, he would incur the divine displeasure and the severest punishment. Allowing that, in the method of his reproof, he does not employ all the circumspection and prudence which he might; allow that he does not always select the fittest opportunities for it; allow that his zeal for your welfare carries him to too great a severity: yet let not that prevent you from hearkening to his admonitions and remonstrances with due attention and a tranquil mind, since at all events you may reap advantage from them. And why should we act less reasonably in such cases than we do in others of a far inferior nature? Do we take it as an affront, do we fret and fume, when a man warns us of the loss of our temporal property, when he advertises us of the base designs of an enemy, when he supplies us with the means of advancing our outward fortune, when he gives us the most wholesome prescriptions for recovering our health and our faculties, or when he saves our life from imminent danger? How willingly do we listen to such admonitions and cautions! How carefully do we lay them to heart! How highly do we esteem him by whom they are bestowed, and how little are we concerned about the words and expressions he has used in conveying them! And shall we not be still more thus disposed, when we are warned of sin, which of all evils is the greatest and worst; when we are shewn

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the danger to which our immortal spirit is exposed ; when we are conjured not to do that which we cannot do without bidding adieu to serenity of mind, to peace of conscience, to the favour of God and the hope of eternal life? Do such remonstrances, such warnings, such intreaties, deserve our displeasure? Do they not, on the contrary, merit our gratitude, even though they should proceed from corrupt motives, or be administered in sinister views? Are not the honest rebukes of a friend infinitely more valuable than the praises of a vile sycophant? Open [or frank] rebuke, says the wise king, is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

The second rule of behaviour is this: Accept the reproof of your brother with humility. Never forget how easy it is for human creatures to trespass and err, how apt they are to swerve from the path of virtue, how imperceptibly they may be intangled in the snares of sin, unless they keep a constant guard over themselves, and studiously avoid every temptation to evil. Constantly reflect, that our heart is but too prone to deceive itself, that we usually account ourselves better than we are, that we seldom notice what is bad and culpable in our temper and conduct, and that it is much harder to detect our own failings than the failings of other men, and to judge of them by their real quality. Impose therefore silence on

pride and self-love, when you are admonished, or cautioned, or rebuked by others. Let it never depend on the decree of these partial and corrupt judges, whether those admonitions, those cautions, or those rebukes are well-founded or not. Seek not to baffle or weaken them by idle excuses, by artful prevarication and subterfuge; but examine your heart, consider your ways, and hearken to the voice of conscience and truth. It is an idle prejudice to imagine that your honour is concerned to appear better than you really are. All the efforts you employ to that end, will generally prove abortive, and you will much sooner impose on yourself than on others. But real honour, a just and noble way of thinking, consists in confessing our trespasses and errors without constraint, in disallowing them, in condemning and striving to amend ourselves.

And this is the third and last rule we have to enjoin you in this behalf. Turn the admonitions and rebukes of your brother to real advantage. Be not so much concerned to know whether they proceed from real affection and friendship, and in what intentions they were administered, as how you may render them useful to you, how you may become wiser and better by them. Consider, that the heart of the sinner becomes more hardened, and that it is more difficult for him to forsake his deviations, and to return to the path of the just, the oftener he allows himself to be admonished
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and cautioned and reprov'd in vain. Consider how much it will torment you hereafter in the hour of death, how much it will torment you in eternity, if you are obliged to make yourself such reproaches as these: I have often enough been warn'd of sin, I have sometimes been reprov'd with affection, sometimes with severity; but I despised the warnings, the reproofs, the corrections of my guide and my companion, my monitor and my friend; I have rejected them with disdain, I have put away from me, as my enemy, him who was endeavouring to save me, and rushed headlong down the precipice which he cautioned me to shun. It is now too late to avoid it; now is the day of salvation past; now I experience the truth of that saying of the judicious king: He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Oh, my friends, would you put yourselves out of the reach of these tormenting reproaches; attend to the salutary precepts we have just been laying down. Admonish one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and receive these exhortations with meekness, with humility, and with a sincere intention to correct yourselves by them. How much will you facilitate the duties of christianity to yourselves! How happily will you vanquish all the enemies of your salvation, if you attack them with combined forces!

How great will be your proficiency in virtue and goodness, if you exhort one another, by example and by friendly suggestions, to christian charity and to all good works! What a ravishing delight will it be to you hereafter, when you shall recollect in the future world these approved demonstrations of unfeigned friendship, and mutually and everlastingly enjoy their glorious fruits! So be it.

SERMON LIII.

Humility a means of Contentment.

GOD, when we meditate on thee, the Eternal, the Infinite, on thee, 'the creator and disposer of all things : we then intimately feel, how feeble, how insignificant we are in ourselves, how absolutely dependent we are on thee and on thy will, that our existence, our endowments, our abilities are all derived from thee ; and then every fond conceit of peculiar worthiness and merits, all haughty claims and pretensions, which we so often presume to form on thee and on mankind vanish from our hearts. Yes, then our foolish passions are silenced and abashed ; we return to the order of nature, and duly understand and feel our proper relations ; and then succeeds that solemn calm within, which may afford an entrance to self-knowledge and contentment. Oh may this salutary sentiment, so becoming us, be frequently active in our minds, entirely pervade them, and continually have that influence on all our thoughts, opinions and actions which it ought to have in the

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the man and the christian ! May true christian humility actuate and direct us all ! From how many devious turnings and crooked paths would it preserve us ! How greatly would it facilitate the work of our happiness as well as our improvement ! And then what truth and consistency would reign in our character and in our conduct ! O God, the father of lights, let our present reflections on these important topics be blessed. Teach us modesty and humility, and let them be our guides on the way to contentment. Under their conduct, we shall assuredly not fail of our aim. We implore it of thee, trusting in the promises of our saviour Jesus, and further address thee in his name. Our father, &c.

JAMES IV. 6.

God — giveth grace unto the humble.

EVERY virtue, that truly deserves the name, every good and pious affection, that prevails in the soul of man, and therefore has a uniform influence on his heart and life, brings its reward along with it ; each is to the person whom it actuates and governs, a spring of happiness constantly flowing and never failing. The delightful and profitable effects resulting from it through his whole frame and condition, and the pleasure and satisfaction which it procures him, are not confined solely to the future world, to the proper state of retribution. The former manifest themselves

selves already here, the latter are already here enjoyed, and both already bless the man, to a greater or less extent, in the present life. If eventually there be exceptions to this rule, they are however rare; and we should find them still more so, if we accustomed ourselves to reflect more on the natural connection of things. Virtue seldom enjoins us that as a duty, the performance whereof would not be beneficial to us of itself; seldom demands a sacrifice of us, which she does not even here compensate to us by other and greater advantages, or by securing us from greater evils and sufferings. In the generality of cases duty and interest, virtue and pleasure are intimately and inseparably united. The same holds good respecting the love of God and the love of man, which is pure felicity both in itself and its effects. Thus likewise it is with diligence and industry, with temperance and moderation, with gentleness, with beneficence: thus with self-control, self-denial, self-possession; thus also with christian humility. At present we will confine ourselves to this last virtue, and in confirmation of the truth of what I have now advanced, consider its manifold and great influence on our happiness. God, we are told in our text, gives grace to the humble. He beholds them with complacency, often prospers and blesses their undertakings and causes them to find various advantages in that frame and temper of mind so agreeable to him.

him. Amongst those advantages contentment holds a foremost place, my pious hearers. It is a no less delicious than natural fruit of the virtue of humility. Let us see how it grows out of it, and is fostered and brought to maturity. To this end we will more particularly enquire or examine how much humility may contribute to our contentment, how greatly it promotes and confirms that virtue.

The humble man is more contented with God, more contented with himself, more contented with his fellow-creatures, more contented with the place he occupies in the world, more contented in prosperity, and more contented in adversity, than he would and could be, if he were not humble. We will endeavour to set these particulars in a perspicuous point of view.

In the first place then the humble man is more contented with God, with his revelations, commands, ordinances and dispensations, than he would and could be without the aid of that virtue. When does man, the creature of dust, presume to blame the works and ways of God, to arraign his government, to murmur at the decrees of his providence, to accuse his laws of rigour and severity and to refuse them his due obedience? Only then, when dazzled by pride, he loses sight of the immense interval that is between God and us, and forgets that he is dust. But will the humble man ever be misled into such extravagancies so manifestly
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at variance with the nature and condition of mankind? No; he is by far too sensible of the greatness and perfection of God, and his own weakness and insignificance, the sovereignty of God over all and his absolute dependence on him, ever to think of him, the Infinite, the Eternal, but with the profoundest reverence, or ever to presume to set himself up for the censor of his actions. He far too sensibly feels, how unable he is to dispense with a superior tuition, and how apt he is to fall into errors when left to himself, for not seizing with gratitude and joy every revelation of the deity, which justifies its pretensions to his understanding and his heart, and not following its directions to virtue and happiness without opposition. He is not confounded or perplexed at any difficulties, any obscurities, that he perceives in nature and in religion, in the works and in the ways of God; for he knows the narrow boundaries that are set to his capacity, and is aware that he cannot overstep them. He is glad of the light that shines upon him, and faithfully profits by it, even though it be only a glimmering dawn and not a bright meridian effulgence, because he knows, that here, in this state of infancy, he sees only through a glass darkly, and is designed to walk more by faith than by sight. He is actuated by the true, childlike temper, which is gentle and tractable, willing to be taught and guided, and pretends to no sagacity above its years.

years. And how should he, who is so thoroughly persuaded of his shortsightedness and ignorance, and never forgets how much higher than our's, how totally different from the thoughts and ways of man, the thoughts and ways of God are, how should he dare to prescribe laws to him, the Omniscient, or to censure anything that he disposes and does and commands and decrees? Were he to do so, must he not entirely mistake himself, and fancy himself something far greater, far more intelligent and sagacious, than he really is? No; humility prompts him to fall prostrate in the dust before the Most-high and to adore him as the All-wise and All-gracious, even there where he perceives nought but darkness around him. She puts into his heart and into his mouth the language of the pious prophet: It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good! The Lord has ever done and will ever do all things well.

The humble man farther is more contented with himself than he would and could be without the assistance of that virtue. Not that he imputes to his good qualities, his merits, a higher value than they properly possess; not that he deems himself wiser and better than he really is, or satisfies himself with any however low degree of wisdom and virtue. No; this would be in manifest opposition to his character. But he is more contented with himself, insomuch as he voluntarily submits to the limitations of his nature
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and his present state, does not complain of them, but is satisfied with them as right and fit, and is never restrained by them from readily doing and gladly enjoying, what he is able at present to do and to enjoy, little as it may be in itself and in comparison with what superior beings may be able to do and to enjoy. If the proud man is prone to break out into lamentable complaints of the melancholy lot of mankind, is ashamed as it were of being a man, and fain would burst the barriers to which he is confined : the humble man is satisfied with being what he is, and with the ends for which God has created him ; rejoices in his human nature, which he has in common with Jesus, the firstborn of every creature ; bears without murmur the evils and troubles that are connected with it, and thinks it no disgrace to comply with its various wants and weaknesses, its defects and limitations. He requires not to be more, to have more, to do and to perform greater things than a creature such as he can be and have and do and perform. It neither disquiets nor surprises him, he never impatiently complains, that there are so many things which he is not able to understand nor to do ; that he is so liable to err and to mistake ; that so many of his projects miscarry ; that he cannot controul such various oppositions from within and from without ; that his satisfactions are so often disturbed, that his health is so easily impaired, his strength so soon exhausted, his designs so often frustrated, that he cannot

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raise himself to that pitch of perfection which he has in view, and to which he ardently aspires. He knows, he feels that he is a man, that he possesses only human capacities and abilities, requires only human pleasures and satisfactions and privileges, and presumes not to lay claim to things, that are incompatible with his nature and destination. He is and has and does and enjoys, what heaven has ordained that he should be and have and do and enjoy, and that suffices to his tranquillity and happiness, who so sensibly feels his dependence on God, and knows nothing of any particular worthiness in himself.

For the same reason the humble man is thirdly more content with the station he occupies in the world and in society, than he would and could be without the aid of that virtue. If the proud man believes himself fit for any business, however intricate, deserving of any station, however exalted; if he presumes that he has abilities and talents competent to anything that man is able to attempt and achieve: the humble man feels his infirmities and the limits of his capacity far too sensibly, is too well aware how much is requisite to the conscientious, the faithful administration of any trust, and how much good the honest man may do in any place and in any situation, for not being satisfied with the post that God in his providence has allotted him, and thinking it adequate to his deserts. He knows and feels that he has no particular

particular claim to outward distinctions, to a shining station, to authority and respect; that God distributes these things among mankind according to his good pleasure and his unerring wisdom, and generally from motives that are concealed from us; that they are instruments in his hand and means official to the furtherance of his higher aims; and the reverence with which he considers all the divine dispensations, the humility with which he submits to them, never allows him to suppose himself injured, or to complain of injustice because he is placed in subordination to others, must serve and obey others, live in obscurity, or move and operate in a contracted circle. He knows that he everywhere finds opportunities and motives to unfold his intellectual faculties, to be useful to his brethren, to promote the benefit of the whole, to exercise himself in obedience to God, in fidelity, in universal charity, in beneficence, in virtue, and thus to render himself capable of superior occupations and preferments in a better world; and this, in his opinion, ennobles and refines all that he does, and induces him to do all with care and conscientiousness. While I do that, thus thinks the humble man, while I do that which God has committed to me to do; while I am working and labouring in that state of life to which it has pleased him to call me, I am fulfilling his will, I am furthering his views, I am engaged and acting in his service;

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and to serve him is always honour, the highest honour, how mean soever the occupations assigned me may appear. Him the servant as well as the master serves, the daylabourer as well as the prince, with him is no respect of persons, he employs one as well as another, and each without distinction to the execution of his wise, all-comprehending plans, and all that is done in his service and according to his will, is important, necessary, noble, honourable, whether it be little or much, low or high, whether it be done in the splendor of the throne or in the obscurity of the cottage.

Again. The humble man is fourthly far more contented with his fellow-creatures than he would and could be without the aid of that virtue. The more sensibly he apprehends his own weakness and the limited state of the human faculties in general; the less does he exact, require, expect from others; the less is he surprised, that they should even err and misdo in a variety of ways; the less will he scorn and condemn them on account of their errors and misdoings; the less will he refuse them on that account his affection, his assistance, his support; on the contrary the more pity and patience will he shew them; the more carefully will he as far as in him lies, remove all impediments and obstructions out of their way; the more easily is he satisfied with honest endeavours and exertions, with well-meant though unsuccessful attempts, with defective and imperfect virtue; the
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greater value does he set on every good and generous action, and even on the earnest inclination and endeavour to act well. The more intimately he feels the natural equality of mankind, their common origin and their common destination; the less will he require of anyone services, civilities, indulgence or relief, which he is not ready to afford him also on every similar occasion; and never will he suppose himself degraded by any offices of kindness that he affords to a brother; but always feels a greater pleasure in serving others than in being served by them. The more modest the opinion he entertains of himself, of his talents, of his merits: the less does he expect any particular respect, reverence or submission from others; the less does he imagine he has any right to it; the less does he insolently avail himself of any preeminence that he really possesses to the offence of his neighbour; and the less is he surprised or offended, though he should not be known, honoured or praised by never so many. The more candour and indulgence he thinks himself in want of: the more candidly and indulgently does he judge of the actions both of his superiors and inferiors, of his enemies and his friends; the more readily does he excuse whatever admits of an excuse; the more is he at all times inclined to hope the best, to believe the best, and rather to judge with too much lenity than too great rigour. The more modestly in fine he thinks of himself; the less

less superiority he arrogates to himself above others ; the more thoroughly he is convinced that he is often in the wrong, without his knowledge and consent : the less does he resent the affronts he receives from his brethren ; the less does he allow himself to be excited by them to rage and revenge ; the readier is he to forgive them without any repugnance or any satisfaction. Pride and gentleness, pride and placability are irreconcilable qualities, they cannot subsist together. But where humility dwells and presides, there reigns also gentleness, there reside magnanimity, placability and a generous affection for enemies. And how many sources of discontent, of sorrow and vexation, are foreclosed where all these kindred virtues harmoniously preside and govern ! How much more of the beautiful and good and agreeable are perceived, observed, felt, enjoyed by the humble man in his intercourse with his brethren, than if puffed up with pride and selfconceit, he regarded every defect he descries in them, as a crime, every failing and every petty affront as a flagrant outrage, and fancied he saw on all sides far more evil than good, far more enemies and adversaries than friends !

The humble man is fifthly more contented in prosperity and in affluence, than he would and could be without the aid of that virtue. The higher the opinion the proud man entertains of himself and of his desert ; the greater and more various his

his pretensions : the less likely it is that they should all be satisfied ; the oftener must he suppose himself neglected and injured by God and man. Seldom do his circumstances, his consequence, his authority appear great enough for him ; seldom do the rewards, the preferments that he receives seem adequate to his merits. And therefore he is generally discontented even in the midst of affluence. Not so the humble man, my pious hearers. He knows of no peculiar desert, nothing of any merits, that ought to be recompensed by that being, who distributes prosperity and adversity among mankind. What have I, he thinks and says, what have I which I have not received ? What do I, which I do not through the efficacy of God ? Wherefore then should I boast of it as though I had not received it, as though I had done it by my own sufficiency ? With him, the humble man, therefore every portion of good, that falls to his share, every gradation of prosperity that he ascends, is the benefaction of God, the free, unmerited gift of his bounty. And how greatly must this enhance their value in his eyes ! How greatly administer to his contentment ! Lord, what am I, such is the language of humility, what am I, that thou hast brought me and my family hither ? Lord, I am far too mean for all the mercy and faithfulness thou hast shewn unto me. The more sensibly affected the humble man is by his dependance on God and the supremacy of God over

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him ; the more intimately he feels, that God only is wise, and that man in most cases is ignorant and blind : so much the more likewise is he forcibly convinced, that God alone infallibly knows, what is fit and profitable for each of his creatures, his subjects, what portion of goods, what degree of strength, of power and authority he can entrust to each of them, and by what methods he should lead every one of them to his destination. And whoever apprehends and believes this, my pious hearers, has no other will than the will of God, and is readily satisfied with the lot which sovereign wisdom has decreed him.

Finally the humble man is likewise more contented in misfortunes or in adversity, than he would and could be without the aid of that virtue. Does the proud man meet with any considerable disaster ; does he lose a part of his property, of his consequence, of his authority ; is he obliged to descend from his elevation, and to exchange the pomp and splendour that surrounded him for obscurity : does he perceive by sad experience the frailty of all outward, visible things, and the perishable nature of his earthly tabernacle : he is apt to imagine that great injustice is done him, that this ought not to have befallen him ; breaks out into lamentable complaints against God and man, and gives himself up to sullenness and discontent. Quite different are the sentiments and demeanour in such cases of the humble man. He knows, he feels,

feels, that as a man, he is a weak and fragile creature, liable to innumerable accidents, that he has no real claim to an uninterrupted succession of prosperous days and favourable contingences, and that it is incompatible with the present condition of mankind and the established order of things; and the more sensible he feels all this, the less is he surprised, when such misfortunes actually befall him, if bad and good days alternately succeed in the course of his life, if he meet with disappointments of various magnitudes on his journey. He knows and feels, that he himself together with all the changes and chances that happen within and without him, are entirely dependent on the decrees of the supreme being, is sensible that God is all and man is nothing, that to him every creature both in heaven and on earth owe the profoundest acquiescence and submission, and that no one has any right to say: What dost thou? And these perceptions, these sentiments, never allow the humble man, who apprehends his own meanness and the all-sufficiency of God, to murmur at the ordinances and dispensations of the Highest, or to arraign him, the lord and arbiter of the world, of injustice. Yes; the man that is actuated by humility and who understands himself, is well apprised how easily he might glide into the abuse of uninterrupted prosperity, how apt he might be to become slothful in well-doing, to be cold and indifferent towards God and religion; how necessary

it is for him to learn temperance, moderation, patience, fortitude, hope and affiance in God; how salutary it is for him by afflictions to become disciplined and established in virtue and piety: and therefore he adores the chastening hand of God as the hand of a wise and beneficent father, and consoles himself in the thought, that every path of duty, however rugged and obscure, that God calls him to go, is the readiest and the safest road to greater perfection, the way to his completion. I will be silent, says he, and not open my mouth, for it is the Lord's doing, and all the works of the Lord are blainceless, all that he does is right.

So true it is, my pious hearers, that the virtue of humility promotes the contentment of a man in every way and in all respects. He is more contented with God, more contented with himself, more contented with the post which he occupies in the world, more contented with his fellow-creatures, more contented in prosperity, and more contented in adversity, than he would and could be without the influence and the guidance of that virtue.

Let me then recommend to you the virtue of humility, my dearest friends, which labours under an evil report with many, and whose salutary effects and consequences are so generally misunderstood. If ye cannot deny, that she smooths and facilitates the way to contentment; oh then let her

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her be your guide and companion upon it. Learn to know yourselves, think modestly of yourselves; set no greater value on your good qualities and actions, your merits and excellences, than they really possess; consider them all in their dependence on God, all as the unmerited gifts of your father in heaven; always bear in mind your natural limitations and weaknesses; never lose sight of your manifold failings and deviations; be ever mindful of the defect of your virtue; keep continually alive in you the sentiment of your frailty and mortality and the fragility of all earthly things; reflect frequently on the immense interval that is between God and you; let the sentiment of his infinite greatness and of your insignificance entirely pervade your soul, and uniformly keep in view the glorious prize of perfection, however distant you may yet be from it. This will open an access for humility to your heart, and animated by her you will learn to view most objects in a different manner, to judge differently of them, and to use them differently, and by that means become continually more placid and contented.

For the same reason let me recommend to you all the virtues without exception. For what holds good of one, holds good of all. They are all means and way to contentment and to happiness; all wells of satisfaction and pleasure, the springs whereof are pure and perennial; all fruitful in agreeable and useful consequences, extending far beyond

beyond death and the grave, even to infinity ; all are the safest guides, the most faithful and beneficent friends of man in doing and in suffering, in want and in abundance, in prosperity and in adversity. Oh revere and cherish them all, ever strive to become better acquainted and more familiar with them all. Venture not to travel the road of life except in their company, that road which is never free from snares and difficulties, and frequently is so toilsome and dangerous. Only in their company and under their guidance will ye be able to avoid those snares, to conquer those difficulties, to escape those dangers, and securely press forward into the superior, the everlasting life.

SERMON LIV.

*Who is particularly qualified for being
Christian.*

GOD, most affectionate and beneficent father of mankind, that we are christians, that as such we possess and enjoy exceeding many and great advantages over all those who are not so, we here rejoice in thy presence; for this we present unto thee our united thanks as for benefits, which we can never sufficiently prize. But how many more, how totally different occasions and motives of joy and gratitude should we have, how much more sincere and cordial would our joy and our gratitude be, if we were all christians in deed and in truth, were all thoroughly pervaded by the spirit of christianity, and knew from experience the whole power and felicity of it! Oh that we were therefore all capable of that happiness, that we all with true singleness of heart and unre-mitted ardour contended, endeavoured and were all upon the stretch after it, and were actually partakers in it! Send down upon us thy holy spirit,

spirit, the spirit of truth from above, to make us attentive to this happiness, to teach us to understand it, to revere it, to long for it, and to help us in surmounting the obstacles, that have hitherto stood in our way to it. Let it awaken and confirm in us the sense of truth, that we may learn to hear, to understand, to trust and to follow the voice of Jesus. Bless to that end our reflections on these important objects, and grant that they may tend to the advancement of real christianity. These our petitions we humbly offer up unto thee in the name of thy son Jesus Christ, and trusting entirely in his promises we further call upon thee as directed by him, saying: Our father, &c.

JOHN xviii. 37.

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

WE have often already, my pious hearers, represented to you Jesus as a teacher of truth commissioned from God. We have shewn you, how important, how consoling, how glorious the truth is which he brought from heaven to the earth, and how adapted that truth is to raise above the ground the mind of him who cordially admits and faithfully adheres to it, to enlarge, to soothe, and to gladden his heart, to refine and dignify his sentiments, to render his whole deportment just and becoming and generally useful, and to procure him

him more comfort and felicity even in this world, than anything else can do. * Who therefore would not suppose, that this truth should meet with universal, unbounded acceptance, that it would be eagerly embraced and honoured with the most willing obedience by everyone to whom it was announced? Who would not imagine, that it would produce the most blessed effects in all places where it was once promulgated, and have the most efficacious influence on the tempers and lives of its professors? And why then is not that the case, my dear friends? Wherefore is this divine truth comparatively but by a few so adopted and so followed, as to be really salutary and consoling to them, as to be and yield to them all that it is calculated to be and to yield to such as are intimately conversant with it? How happens it, that, with all its excellency, the number of true, genuine christians, whose thoughts and affections and lives are entirely christian, and who thoroughly experience the felicity of christianity, is yet so small? What is the reason of this apparent discordance between the cause and its effect, this incongruity between the magnitude of the previously contrived arrangements and the seemingly inconsiderable extent of what is accomplished by them? Can then the gospel cease to be the power of God and the wisdom of God, a divinely appointed, a divinely efficacious means to human happiness? — — Our saviour explains

explains all this to us in our text, my pious hearers. He there discovers to us the reason, the only true reason, of this no less common than lamentable and perplexing phenomenon. Every one that is of the truth, says he, whoever has the inward sense of truth, he, only he, hearkens to my voice, he alone understands me, trusts me, follows me, and arrives under my conduct to the height of human perfection and happiness. — — — Thus it is, my dear friends. All mankind are not alike susceptible of christianity; all are not equally well qualified for being christians; as all are not capable of the same measure of endowments and abilities and the same kind or the same degree of attention, of activity, of moral goodness, of love, of joy, of felicity. Christianity presupposes in them, in whom it is calculated to manifest its entire efficacy and felicity, a moral sense, a genius and disposition that is not common to all men, and which even in those with whom it is found, must be carefully tended and fostered, lest it should decline and become extinct. How extraordinary soever the remark may appear; however deplorable it may be in certain respects: it is nevertheless true; it is founded in experience and in the very nature of the case; and it is of capital importance for us clearly to apprehend it and to be fully convinced of its truth, because it acquaints us with the distinctive character of the disciples and friends of Jesus.

Jesus. To assist you, my pious hearers, in that apprehension and that conviction is my design under the expectation of the divine blessing in the present discourse. We shall therefore pursuant to the suggestion of our text examine and answer the important question: What is implied by being of the truth; and how he who is of the truth hears the voice of Jesus? Or, who is eminently qualified for being a christian?

The sense of truth my pious hearers, is that which qualifies a man for christianity and its entire efficacy and felicity, what makes him an apt scholar, a tractable disciple, a confidential friend of Jesus, his master; that plain, direct, ingenuous, natural genius and disposition, which leads him to observe, recognize, revere, love, practise, adhere to the truth, as soon as ever it appears to him, and voluntarily and unreservedly to submit to be regulated in all respects by it; a temper and disposition in perfect contrast with that propensity to diffidence, to doubt, to cavil, to prevaricate, to the continual fluctuation between chusing and rejecting, liking and disliking, believing and disbelieving, in opposition to that insincerity of conduct which is always having recourse to objections, to exceptions, subterfuges and evasions, and totally excludes all these failings. — This sense of truth is precisely that, which Jesus in our text calls being of the truth. It is indicated in all that a man thinks and does,
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in his conceptions and judgments, in his sentiments and affections, in his moral actions, in his whole demeanour; and everyone who has this sense of truth, whoever prefers and loves truth in sensation, truth in thought, truth in action, truth in every mode of speech and expression, whoever prizes and loves natural, artless, graceful simplicity above all things, and in all his dealings is wont to go strait forward, would fain be what he appears, and wishes to appear what he is, such an one is eminently qualified for being a christian. It will be proper however to descend to particulars for rendering the subject more clear and perspicuous.

Whoever is of the truth, whoever has the inward sense of truth, is, first, solely concerned about the truth in his knowledge, and particularly in his religious knowledge. He is prone to admit and to follow it, find it where he may, how it will, whether it present itself to him in this or in another form, whether it agree with what others call by that name or not, be it never so easy or never so difficult, never so much in opposition to the maxims and opinions prevailing in the world and to the inordinate lusts and affections of the human heart. Whenever it appears to him as truth; whenever it diffuses light around him; whenever it gives him satisfactory solutions on points which must be most interesting to a rational creature panting after perfection and immortality :

mortality: he immediately lays hold on it, rejoices in it, and knows and experiences at once, from the light and the felicity it procures him, that it is truth. Biassed by no preconceived opinions, wedded to no system of human wisdom, not proud of his own discernment, not steeled by prejudices against the voice of God in nature and in revelation, attentive to every sound of it, enslaved to no predominant sensual passion, and therefore bound to no corrupt vindication of it: his heart stands ever open to truth, is susceptible of every impression from it; and this gives him a certain delicate sensibility to truth, that prevents him from being apt to mistake it, to confound it with error, that leads him into the track of it far more quickly, far more certainly than others though greatly his superiors in learning and penetration, enables him far more quickly, far more definitely to perceive and feel what are his wants as a man, what are his requisites to the attainment of virtue and happiness, what instruction is suited to his nature, to his destination, to his condition, what is worthy of God, what bears as it were his stamp, his impress upon it, what comes from him and leads to him, what is consonant or not to the language in which he daily speaks to us by his works, by his providence and by the spirit that informs us, and with the manner in which he reveals himself to us in the operations of nature. — — — And if a man now read
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the gospel with this sense of truth, with this sensibility to truth, if he hear and examine the doctrine of Jesus in its original simplicity and purity, with a heart thirsting after light, after tranquillity, after undissembled virtue, after firm hope, after fellowship with God: how soon will this doctrine commend itself to him as truth, as divine truth! How intelligibly will he hear in it the voice of the father of mankind, the voice of supreme, eternal love, calling home to him his wandering children, animating them with courage, offering them support, promising them felicity; treating them as weak, frail, timid creatures, but capable of greater improvement and higher perfection; condescending to their comprehension, becoming more visible and accessible to them through his son, and giving them in him the teacher, the leader, the captain and the lord, of which they were so much in need! How clearly will he apprehend in the person of this son and representative of God, in all his discourses and actions, the character of wisdom, of love, of veracity, of consummate integrity and disinterested virtue! How plainly hear the language of the faithful and magnanimous friend and deliverer, the safe and authentic teacher and guide! How soon will this doctrine infuse a serene light into his mind, peace and joy and confidence into his heart, inspire him with fresh life and vigour, and cause him to perceive and feel, that

that it must as certainly proceed from God, as it conducts him to God, brings him nearer to God, and renders him more susceptible of his influence and his converse! — — And how firmly, how confidently will he then adhere to this doctrine, how entirely be pervaded by its spirit, how little liable to be disturbed by the difficulties that lie in the very nature of the thing, in the relations of the creator and the creatures, of the finite and the infinite, and which accompany all the revelations of God, in nature as well as in scripture, how little capable of being seduced, by the objections of the learned or by the cavils of the artful, to reject, what his heart and conscience pronounce to be truth from additional evidence every day! Thus does his sense of truth, his plain, open, natural temper, his honest, ingenuous disposition bring him to an intimate, lively conviction of the divinity of christianity, at which but for this temper of mind he would either not at all or not till after long and laborious deflexions, not without great waste of time and abilities, have been able to arrive.

And the want of this temper of mind is the very reason why so many nominal christians are not more qualified for being really such, and for experiencing the efficacy of such an entire and consolatory faith. One that is imbued with prejudices, who searches not so much for truth as for the confirmation of his own opinions, who is
already

already attached to some particular system of human wisdom, of worldly prudence, of temporal grandeur, and then sits down to study christianity or to the examination of it: will seldom have the good fortune to feel its truth, its dignity, its felicity, and to follow with sincerity and constancy its artless, natural, but therefore apparently unimportant and extraordinary directions to virtue and to happiness. Hence it was, that the christian doctrine found at first so few adherents among the wise, the learned, the prudent, the great of this world; that it was principally embraced by those who were despised and deemed foolish by the world; and that our saviour, sensibly affected by the idea, exclaimed: I thank thee, o father, lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Those obstacles to the reception and observance of christianity have not yet however ceased from operating; they cannot even now be compatible with the sense of truth: and a man in order to surmount them must first have learnt, by various contingences, trials, misfortunes, to know and feel the insufficiency of that wisdom and prudence, the deceitfulness of that happiness, ere he is desirous and capable of seeking and finding in christianity the wisdom, the efficacy, the felicity which it bestows on its sincere confessors and votaries.

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The sense of truth shews itself secondly in the sentiments and affections of a man, and renders him likewise in this respect fit to be a christian. Every one that is of the truth, sees things as they are, and not as they appear to be; and is affected towards them, as befits their real quality and their analogies to us, and not as error, prejudice, habit, example decree that we should be affected towards them. His affections are turned on what is really true and beautiful and good, and not on what has only the semblance or the appellation of true, of beautiful, of good. He esteems not all that shines and glitters, but only that which, with or without glitter and show, possesses intrinsic, peculiar, permanent worth; loves not everything that possesses outward attractions and pleases for a longer or a shorter time, but only that which, with these attractions or without them, is truly amiable, and must and will be so at all times and in all worlds; hates and detests not everything that seems to be disagreeable, troublesome, injurious, that is called labour and privation, that has an ugly outside, but only that which is indeed bad and prejudicial, and at all times, and in all associations is bad and prejudicial, only that which causes him labour without reward, loss without compensation, and the inward quality whereof is as dark and repulsive as its outward aspect. — — What now, my dear friends, is more adapted to such a pitch and direction of sentiments and affections

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fections than christianity? How capacitated, how qualified must it render a man for being a christian in the strictest acceptation of the word! What a ready hearing must the doctrine of Jesus find with him, the doctrine which bids him eschew all vile, corrupt, inordinate lusts and passions, and everywhere preaches to him the purest love of the excellent and generous, sheer love to God and love to man, which calls upon him to abhor sin and vice as the greatest of all calamities, to esteem a pure, a guiltless heart, and a pious, virtuous, public-interested life as his highest honour and dignity, which bids him seek his happiness, not so much in the possession of external transient objects as in the advancement of his intellectual perfection and in his nearer correspondence with God, which exhorts him rather to pursue the things that are unseen than such as are visible, rather those that are eternal than those which are temporal, directs him to sacrifice all considerations to duty and virtue, to spare no pains and to shrink from no danger for the common benefit, rather to lose all things, to pluck out his right eye and cut off his right hand, than injure his soul, his immortal soul, and forfeit the happiness of the life to come. How rightly will he comprehend the spirit of all these precepts and directions! How quickly, how sensibly, how entirely will he feel their propriety, their necessity, their reality! How heartily, how completely submit himself to them!

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The sense of truth, my pious hearers, has thirdly a no less powerful influence on all the actions of the individual, on the whole of his moral conduct, and makes him also in this respect the fitter for being a christian. Truth in thought and apprehension leads to truth in action. With whomsoever the former is all in all, to him will likewise the latter never be indifferent. No; there must be truth in every one of his actions, they must be the expression, the proof, the effect of his sentiments, feelings, affections at the time, they must tally with truth, that he may approve of them, attribute to them a certain value, be satisfied that they are virtuous. But there must moreover be truth, a harmony between all his actions, combining them all together, rendering them all uniform. None of them must be incoherent with the rest. They must all be performed on the same principles, in the same good designs, by the same rule, in the same spirit. To everyone that is of the truth, to him that has the sense of truth, every incongruity, every irregularity, every dissonance occasions a disagreeable, a painful sensation, and none more than the moral. Only that behaviour which in every case is befitting the nature of the thing, and the condition of the persons with whom we have to do, and the relations that subsist between them and us, only that is in his eyes beautiful, because it is true. But to treat a subject, or a person, to accost him, to behave towards him,

in such a manner as though they were not what they really are and what they are to us, but were something totally different : this is so manifestly contrary to his apprehension of truth, to his love of order, that he can never without displeasure remark it either in himself or in others. To think and to speak, to believe and to live, to will and to do, to promise and to perform, to plan and to execute, to seem and to be ; must according to his notions and feelings always coincide, can never by our own fault be at variance, without destroying all moral order, beauty and truth. — — — The christian morality therefore, which is thoroughly pure, thoroughly holy, which preaches sheer virtue and piety, which everywhere inculcates the practice of what we believe and profess, can certainly never deter him from christianity ; it must render it extremely venerable and acceptable to him. Virtue is truth ; holiness and piety are truth. Whoever is truly enamoured with these, loves the others also. Whoever possesses the sense of truth, has at the same time the justest, surest, quickest moral feeling, a decided predominant affection for all that is just, that is reasonable, that is becoming, that is virtuous and praiseworthy. And how capacitated, how qualified must he therefore be for the strictest prosecution of christianity ! Of christianity, which requires of its professors a thorough reformation of heart and life, which rejects all hypocrisy and falsity, all
divided

divided obedience, all commixture of light and darkness, and demands a constant sincerity and uprightness; of christianity, which commands us to regulate ourselves in all respects by the will of God and the example of Jesus, in all events to look unto God and to Jesus, to do all to the glory of God and for the general good; in all places, at all times, in all transactions, in all regards to think and act discreetly and piously and affectionately, and in all points to reach out unto perfection! What can be more adapted to the sense of truth than such a morality!

Lastly the sense of truth discovers itself in the whole of a man's outward carriage and his intercourse with society, and renders him also in this respect eminently qualified to be a christian. The spirit of christianity is in evident opposition to the spirit of vanity, to that fondness for ostentation and show, for pomp and magnificence, which infatuates the multitude. It requires us not indeed to disfigure or deform the outward man, but to take far more care of the inner man. It abridges us as to dress, to ornament, to external elegance, of a taste for whatever is extravagant, all that exceeds what neatness and propriety demand. — Now everyone that is of the truth, that has the sense of truth, feels most sensibly the vanity, the emptiness, the unmanliness of all these things; and as he neither will nor can require us to pay him particular respect merely on account of his finer

finer dress, on account of his higher rank, on account of his shining equipage; so on the other hand he attaches no value to any honour, to any praise, to any reputation which is not built on intrinsic perfection, on wisdom and virtue, and as little can he envy those who pride themselves on such outward distinctions, or humble himself before them on their account. — If he comply in this respect, as he really does, with the several customs, usages, regulations and laws of society and civility, he never does it as a child, who gazes with amazement at this glittering pageantry, is delighted with it and in the glare loses sight of the substance, but always like a man, who knows how to distinguish the accessories from the reality, and to employ the former as means subservient to the promotion of the latter. — — And if christianity be inimical to all hypocrisy, dissimulation and flattery, all participation in base designs and iniquitous actions from motives of vile complaisance, if it be in opposition to all kinds of difference and disagreement between our sentiments, gestures, words and works; if it recommend to its professors a childlike simplicity, the natural, ingenuous, communicative, bold, direct, artless, confidential temper and behaviour of a child; who can be better fitted for christianity, than the man that is of the truth, who has the sense of truth? He who is so prone to conceive of things as they are, so apt to judge and to speak of them as he conceives

conceives of them and as he is affected towards them, and so fain to do that which his sound judgment and his good heart prompt him to do! He who is so distant from all base designs and views, is honestly affected in all things, and had so much rather impute good than evil to others! How much more fit for christianity is he than him who is called the man of the world, than the fop, whose thoughts, sentiments, looks, gestures, words and deeds are in perpetual strife; who scarcely ever is that which he seems and affects to be, and almost as seldom appears what he is; who truly esteems and loves and wishes well to hardly anybody, and yet solemnly assures almost everybody of his particular esteem and affection and of his most hearty good wishes; praises and blames almost always without conviction; and thinks himself so much the wiser as he imagines himself to be more unfathomable and impenetrable! No; in proportion as this, highly valued indeed, but base and abominable disposition prevails in a man, the farther is he from christianity, the more incapable of experiencing its power and felicity.

No; whoever would partake of this happiness, must be of the truth. He alone who in the manner we have been shewing is of the truth, is so actuated and governed by the sense of truth, he alone, as our text expresses it, hears the voice of Jesus. And how very differently does he hear it, from him who is not thus of the truth! He hears
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the voice of Jesus as the voice of truth, as the voice of consummate wisdom and affection, as the invitation to happiness. He comprehends the scope and design of the doctrines and actions and precepts of Jesus, enters deeply into their spirit, understands even his more distant hints, and there, without any scholastic learning, finds far more light and energy and satisfaction in his necessities, than he otherwise could anywhere discover. But he likewise follows without reluctance or delay the voice of Jesus, boldly trusts to him and his guidance, attends to all his admonitions and cautions, hearkens to all his commands, moulds himself entirely upon his model, resigns himself unreservedly to his declarations and promises, and seeks and finds in him and through him, whatever has a tendency to render him eminently wise and virtuous and blissful.

Thus deeply grounded, my pious hearers, both in the nature of man and of christianity is the declaration of Jesus in our text: Everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice! Thus certain is it, that the sense of truth alone renders a man thoroughly qualified and fit to be a christian, and to assert in reality the title he bears! Oh, that it were, that this noble sense of truth were, but more common and effective among us and everywhere else! — May not however our present tempers and lives have a far greater tendency to impede than to forward the expansion, the dissemination, the

the efficacy of it? May it not even thence proceed, that there are not more genuine christians, why christianity does not operate more and with greater effect among its professors? — — — Ah, my dear friends, this I can neither conceal from you nor myself: I find everywhere many good and laudable, but few truly christian and thoroughly christian sentiments and actions; much worldly prudence, but little christian wisdom; much semblance, but little reality; much art, but little nature; much, very much fondness for vanity and ostentation, but little, very little love of graceful simplicity and intrinsic merit; much rational discourse and judicious observation concerning duty and virtue, but little calm, discreet, persevering practice of duty and of virtue. And therefore I find likewise much boasting and noise about enjoyed or expected pleasures, but little real satisfaction, little heartfelt joy; much pretension to present and future felicity, but little actual enjoyment of that felicity. — And whence, my dear friends, proceeds all this, unless because so many who call themselves christians, are not of the truth, are not actuated and governed by the sense of truth? — This sense of truth is indeed natural to all men, but with the generality it remains not long unspoilt. By an education more or less wrong, by the early introduction of dissimulation and constraint, by that formality — the artificial trammels into which the thoughts and feelings

feelings are immediately forced, by what is termed erudition and science, which passes under the name of polite manners and the art of living, and of making one's fortune in the world: by all these the sense of truth is enervated and impaired, in one earlier, in another later, in one more, in another less. In many quite suppressed and stifled in their very infancy. And then, if it is ever to be revived, ever to regain the ascendant and shew itself in its native vigour, it must be owing to a concurrence of circumstances particularly fortunate.

Whoever therefore, my dear friends, whoever still feels within him any remains of this sense of truth; whoever still at times sees through the chaos of human opinions and systems; still at times beholds men and things in their natural form without disguise; still at times transpierces the pomp, the state, the pageantry, the motly clouds, in which they are enveloped, confounded and disguised, and discovers through them the nullity of human lies and imposture and the dignity of nature, of simplicity, of truth: oh with all possible care let him tend and foster the tender germ of generous sentiments and actions not yet entirely extinct, let him notice that reanimating voice of truth, which still resides and works within him, and follow with the utmost diligence and fidelity its declarations, excitements, precepts, if he would arrive to a vital, experimental knowledge of christianity!

And

And you, eminently favoured, venerable persons, few as ye may be in number, who are entirely governed, in all things conducted and led by this sense of truth, whom it has formed into genuine christians, whom it has thoroughly pervaded with the spirit of christianity and rendered susceptible of its whole felicity; oh rejoice in your happiness and prefer it far before all the blandishments of fortune however inviting! Never be ashamed of your natural, artless, simple, but in reality wise and honourable sentiments and disposition and behaviour. Let your sense of truth be continually more and more discernible in your words and actions; in what you are and do. Though it should be never so much misconstrued by many, by most; though it should even bring upon you from many, from most, the imputation of a deficiency in the knowledge of the world, in that of mankind, a want of prudence, of politeness, of genteel and engaging manners: be not troubled at it. The saying of the apostle is applicable here: Therefore the world knoweth you not, because it knew him not. No; it should rather be your boast and your glory, that ye hear the voice of Jesus, that ye understand him and trust him; that while others are following their lusts and passions, you are guided by his directions and his precepts, that while others adhere to the maxims, customs, examples of the multitude, you are forming yourselves after his likeness; that
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while others are satisfying themselves with empty words, with airy visions, with flattering dreams, with delusive hopes, you know and enjoy true peace of mind and lasting happiness, and belong to that chosen few, who not only walk the way of virtue and perfection, but the way of the purest virtue and the highest perfection of our nature, and will hereafter in the kingdom of truth, where only real distinctions avail, be as far exalted above the multitude not only of wicked, but of less good and noble characters, as at present you may probably seem to be degraded below them. Oh may this chosen few increase among us and everywhere else, that the triumph of truth, the triumph of christianity may be more glorious and complete from day to day! Amen.

SERMON LV.

*By what means the Sense of Truth is debilitated
and suppressed.*

GOD, who art our creator and our father, thou didst form us good, after thy likeness, and for happiness. The path of truth and virtue, that leads to it, is open to us all. All of us, as we come from thy forming hand, are capable of discerning truth and of practising virtue. But how soon, how much is man, thy glorious work, disfigured by his own misconduct! How soon is innocence overpowered by vice! Gracious father, alas who is there among us, that is still so thoroughly good, so guiltless, as he came from thy hands! — But, such as we are, thy mercy leaves us not without relief. It warns us against further ruin, calls us back from our deviations, affords us new resources and encouragements to the apprehension of truth and to the advancement of our spiritual perfection. Oh that we might attend to thy admonitions, give ear to thy parental voice, and return to thee and to felicity! We are assembled

sembled here, o God, to learn in this respect thy holy will. Let us study it with strict attention, with the docility and obedience of good-tempered children, not yet thoroughly spoil and hardened in their miscarriages. Bless to this end the discourse of our teacher, and dispose the way of thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation ; that among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by thy most gracious and ready help, through Jesus Christ our lord ; who instructed us to say : Our father, &c.

JOHN xviii. 37.

Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

FROM the words of our text I lately took occasion to shew you, how much depends on the inward sense of truth, how it capacitates and fits a man for being a true sterling christian and for experiencing the whole power and felicity of christianity. The defect of this sense of truth we considered as the principal reason why it proves so difficult to many persons, to honour christianity with entire faith and willing obedience ; why so many others are totally supine and indifferent towards it ; and why but few of those who profess it, are in thought and life entirely christian and thereby thoroughly cheerful and happy. That view of the subject raised in me and unquestionably likewise in some of you the ardent wish, that this inward
sense

sense of truth were more general and operative amongst us and everywhere else ; and that wish has naturally led me to investigate the causes, whereby the sense of truth is debilitated and suppressed among mankind. An investigation which must of course be no less important to us than the promotion of real christianity is to us.* Never shall we radically heal a disease, as long as we are ignorant of the cause of it : never remove the obstructions that debar us the path of happiness, unless we understand them, know where they lie and of what nature they are. And then, though we should be too weak to surmount or remove them, we may however warn others of them, and render that practicable and easy to them, which perhaps by length of time is become impracticable or extremely difficult to us. Allow me therefore, my dear friends, to lay before you in my present discourse, what I have discovered from those inquiries, or to shew you, whereby the sense of truth, particularly as far as it qualifies us for the due reception of christianity, is weakened and suppressed among mankind.

Previous to this however we should once more recollect what is meant by the sense of truth. We mean by it, namely, not merely in general the susceptibility of truth, inasmuch as it is common to all mankind, but rather a particular species of it which is apparent in a superior degree of sound, uncorrupted judgment, or that direct, just, natural

ral, ingenuous temper and disposition, not fettered by prejudices, not prostituted to any low appetites and passions, which inclines a man to observe, revere, love, practise, and adhere to the truth, immediately as it presents itself to him, and willingly and completely to be guided by it in all respects; that exquisitely fine unspoilt touch, whereby it distinguishes it from error and affectation, so as never to confound the voice of nature, the voice of conscience, the voice of God, with the language of art, with the clamour of sensual lusts and appetites; that, honest, upright, natural, spiritual, sensitive faculty, whereby he follows the light that enlightens him, and seeks and does that which he apprehends to be fair and equitable. This quick sense of truth, this sensibility to truth, this sincerity in reasoning and acting, is directly opposed to that indifference and apathy in matters of morality and religion; to that propensity to diffidence, to doubt, to cavil, to dispute without object and without end; to that perpetual fluctuation between truth and error, belief and unbelief, virtue and vice, and the duplicity of those who wish to reconcile truth with falsehood, virtue with vice, and to divide faith and conduct asunder. Excellent now as this sense of truth is, so easily may it be weakened and vitiated, and so often is it actually weakened and vitiated. Let us therefore seriously examine into the causes of it.

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The first, the fundamental cause of the debilitation and suppression of the sense of truth among mankind lies in their education. The sense of truth is, as I lately observed, natural to all men, expands in propitious circumstances and by means of careful nurture in all; they are all endowed with the capacity and inclination to perceive, to apprehend the truth in speculation, in sentiment, in speech, in action, and to give it the preference to error, to deceit, to falsehood, to inconsistency, and the like. Truth of every kind has, for unpractised, uncorrupted, unhardened characters, marks that cannot easily be mistaken, attractions and beauties which can still less be resisted. To the sound understanding and the tender susceptible heart of such persons will God neither by nature, nor by scripture, reveal himself in vain. They will hear his voice and pay due obedience to it. But this natural sense of truth is a tender, delicate plant, which rarely thrives without diligent and discreet nurture, which can bear neither the blights and nipping blasts of the weather, nor the heat of the forcing-house, so liable is it to be cut off in the bud or withered in its early bloom. This nurture must be chiefly given it by education. But how then is that noble and promising plant to be fostered and reared? What analogy has the early part of education generally to the evolution and advancement of the sense of truth? Ah, my dear friends, what is left undone, in order as soon as possible to weaken and suppress it, in

order to extirpate this paradisaical plant as a noisome weed from the yielding heart, ere it has taken firm root? — How often is the child unnecessarily imposed upon? How often perplexed by ambiguous or indirect answers? How often unseasonably restrained from asking questions by threats and chastisements? How often checked by reproaches of silliness and stupidity, when he judges and speaks of persons and things as they appear to him, as he is moved to it at the time, and therefore as he should judge and speak of them? How quickly do we see his native, innocent simplicity and frankness overawed by being represented to him as improper and unbecoming? How soon must he learn to dissemble, to play the hypocrite, to lie, to flatter? And how much will he be commended, praised, caressed, preferred if he be an apt scholar in these matters, the glorious elements of the art of living, and attains to a proficiency in them beyond others of his age! How soon must he learn implicitly to believe, repeat, mimick every thing, and to be absolutely guided in all respects by prescribed models? What is more early instilled into his mind than a fondness for show, parade, ostentation and vanity? What is earlier praised to him than the advantages of figure, of dress, of outward forms of behaviour, than things that are not properly his own, which are borrowed from others, and possess no real value? And how rare is that reverence which is due to a child respecting what is said and done in his

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presence! How many totally false, how many partial judgments, how much extravagant praise, how much severe, unmerited censure, how many unfounded declarations of approbation and of contempt, of affection and of hatred, how many sallies of malignant passions is he obliged to see and to hear from those about him! Against how many objects therefore must he be immediately prepossessed, in behalf of how many others must he be immediately biassed! And how much by all this must the multitude of prejudices, the multitude of obstacles be increased, which his sense of truth and his sensibility to truth will have to surmount whenever they appear!

Another cause of the debilitation and suppression of the sense of truth in mankind lies in their early instruction; which is usually as unpropitious and detrimental to the expansion and growth of their natural sensibility to truth as their education in general. Instead of furnishing the child or the youth with objects of knowledge, of bringing them to him, exciting his attention to them, turning them round as it were before him and shewing them on various sides, and assisting his attention, when once it is in motion; and thus to let his mind unmolestedly and entirely admit the impression of outward objects, allow him to think and judge of them in his own way, to act for himself, and to discover by degrees what he is searching for; rather to remove the obstructions

out of his way on which he might happen to fall and which he is not yet able to get the better of, than drag him along with us, or require of him to proceed in equal paces and on the same line with us : — instead of this, the practice is to infuse or transplant into the child or the youth, the ideas themselves and whole trains of ideas as we have them — the last result of so many accurate or erroneous operations of our mind, and perhaps not even of our own mind, but of the mind of him who was our tutor. What however could more weaken and perplex the sense of truth, — what more blunt the sensibility to truth than such adscititious ideas, infused or transplanted into us without due preparation, which were first conceived in a totally different form, and have grown on a foreign ground and soil! — — Suffer the word of exhortation, such of ye as are tutors of children, instructors of youth, who are desirous to fulfil your honourable office. Avoid these too common mistakes. It may probably indeed at first somewhat increase the difficulty of your employment; perhaps ignorant parents, who are more concerned that their children should learn to talk or rather to chatter on various subjects, than to think, will not be satisfied with you: but by pursuing this method you will soon alleviate your task, and what you obtain from it will be permanent fruit. — — Require not therefore that your pupils should absolutely proceed in the very
same

same track, that you have gone, or still go. Let them go their own way, that you may afterwards know how they have arrived at the object, and even when they shall no longer have a guide, may be able to travel farther the same road with safety. Be satisfied with having removed some obstructions and impediments from before them; with having taught them to mind their way, and to observe the progress they make on it, with having warned them of devious turnings, or if, for their correction, they have wandered about some time in them, and are now aware that they have been straying, with having admonished them of their error and set them right. — — Neither require that they should see all objects with your eyes, and that the same object should strike their apprehension and in the same manner as it does yours. Let them however see that which they can see, and apprehend that which they are able to apprehend. Otherwise they will get the habit of fancying onewhile that they perceive and apprehend something while in reality they perceive nothing and apprehend nothing, and at other times will not trust their own sight and their own feelings, when they really both see and feel. In either case the natural sense of truth and the natural sensibility to truth must necessarily be great sufferers. — — The same thing holds good particularly respecting the ordinary method of religious instruction. How strange, to pretend to supply

supply wants before they appear, ere they are felt in the slightest degree, ere the least attempt has been made to excite them, or to call the attention of the child and the youth to what happiness is, and what are the means and way to happiness. Here the sense of truth and the sensibility to truth are not first nurtured and exercised on objects, of which we have already some experience and sentiment, not on matters that have some analogy with our own little concerns, occupations, amusements, in which therefore we take a real interest, on which we think and form opinions, in which we may proceed as it were alone step by step, from simple to compound, from what lies close to us, to what is farther off, and to take notice of the way by which we accomplish this, so as to be able to find it again hereafter. No; the method in common use is to begin by the most complicated, incomprehensible dogmas of religion and christianity, what are called mysteries, by propounding a number of unintelligible definitions and explanations, a string of metaphysical speculations, which being open to perpetual dispute must of necessity be perpetually useless, a variety of subjects that blindfold our reason and muffle our understanding, whereon the pupil bestows not one thought and for which he has no feelings, in which he can take no interest and find no relish, and during the whole transaction is just as little at his ease, as he would be in a dark room, where he
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can distinguish nothing, discern nothing, and where he cannot dare to stir without danger of incurring mischief. And what can thence ensue except that the person will indeed learn to talk about truth and religion, but will neither understand, nor feel, nor love them, and that afterwards he will either be indifferent towards them, or suffer himself to be implicitly led by others ! Oh avoid these errors, all you who are occupied in the religious instruction of children and youth, avoid these errors lest you stifle their sense of truth in the very bud. Spread light and not darkness around them, excite in them agreeable, cheerful sentiments and not disgust and aversion, treat them as active and not merely as passive creatures, always consult their own understanding and their own heart, let them take part in all, force not upon them any idea which they cannot conceive, any words which they cannot understand, any sentiments which they cannot have, attempt not to expel nature by art, teach them to know God as their father, Jesus as their best friend, and benefactor, and mankind as their brethren and sisters, if you wish them to find the path of truth, to have truth for their constant guide, and to be happy by the knowledge and love of it.

A third cause whereby the sense of truth is debilitated and suppressed with the generality of mankind, is the fondness for imitation which appears

pears in infancy and grows with increasing years. But too frequently are we ashamed of being that which we are, and determine to be what others are, those who have somehow or other obtained the right of giving the tone, or who by some accident have got into the foremost rank. We are afraid therefore of trusting to our own inherent sense of truth, our own native sensibility to truth without regard to others, and judge and act not so much in pursuance of our own perceptions and feelings, as according to what we hear others pronounce and as we see them act. — The dread of passing for a strange and eccentric sort of person, one who has not the manners of the gay world, is not in the mode, has not the graces and elegances of life; this dread with the generality of mankind is of sufficient force to repress their internal feelings, and by imperceptible degrees so to obtuse them, that they at length only affirm and deny, esteem and despise, hate and love, do and forbear to do, just as the great multitude or a few of its leaders, declare it to be true or false, good or bad, becoming or unbecoming, beautiful or ugly. Thus it is with objects that relate to common life, its satisfactions and pleasures: thus likewise in matters wherein religion and virtue are concerned. Mankind in general are more desirous to be thought knowing, than of being so in reality; had rather be reputed to have an exquisite taste, to possess a delicate sensibility, than actually to have

have a fine taste and nice feelings; rather embrace and defend error with the many, than stand up for truth with the few; had rather shine in the large circle of vanity, than adhere to nature and simplicity in retirement; had rather seem than be; rather adjust themselves to the prevailing fashion, and so deny and abandon their own sense and their own feelings, than by an honest docility to them expose themselves to the danger of being occasionally laughed at or held up to scorn as a singular character. But how can one of this disposition, my dear friends, still retain any sense and feeling for generally neglected truth, for unfashionable virtue, and especially for christianity, the principles, the object, the spirit and genius whereof are so diametrically opposite to those by which the people of what is called the polite and great world conduct themselves, whereat they aim, and whereby they are actuated and governed?

Depraved lusts and passions are a fourth cause, whereby the sense of truth is debilitated and suppressed in numbers of mankind. Where the former, disorderly affections and passions, predominate, there the latter, the sense of truth, cannot obtain a hearing. There no enquiry is made concerning what is true and beautiful and just and proper, but after what can gratify the appetites, what will flatter the passions, what tends to promote their views and designs, what can best ex-

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cuse and justify their excesses and miscarriages. There all the counteracting remonstrances of reason, all the repugnant emotions of the heart, all the restraining suggestions and warnings of conscience, all the declarations of truth are extremely disagreeable and odious. There we resolve not to see, not to judge of, not to treat the propositions before us, the persons with whom we have to do, as they are, but as our lusts, our passions determine that they should be or appear. The more completely therefore and the longer any one suffers himself to be swayed by inordinate lusts and passions, the more certainly and completely will his innate sense of truth be weakened and suppressed. And is not this shameful prostitution the principal reason that such numbers of persons are incapable of perceiving and feeling the truth, the dignity, the divinity of christianity? It sets its face against the vile lusts and passions of their heart, it condemns them without exception, and without mercy, it absolutely requires them to be conquered and subdued; and therefore in the eyes of the wretch who is subjugated to these lusts, who hugs his chains and glories in his bondage, it must have a hateful, a terrific aspect, repelling him ever farther from it. — As truth, when rightly understood and faithfully followed, conducts to liberty, so liberty likewise leads the man whom she informs and animates, to a continually increasing knowledge and love of truth.

truth. Would ye then, my dear friends, be the confidants of truth, would ye hear and understand her voice, whether she speak here or there, in a louder or a gentler tone, ye must not be the slaves of sensual lusts and passions. She reveals herself in all her dignity and glory to those alone who receive her with a mind at ease and a tranquil heart, and accept her with undivided love, not only as the rule of speculation, but also as the rule of conduct. Would ye particularly be the subjects of Jesus, would ye be capable of the generous temper and the eminent felicity which belong to the partakers of the heavenly calling; you must not wear any servile chains, you must be under no other master but him, must obey no other laws but his. Only to those who are free, or at least are struggling for liberty, can his doctrine be divine truth, divine power, and wisdom.

The prevailing fondness for vanity and ostentation is a fifth cause, whereby the sense of truth is enervated among mankind. Nature and simplicity are the handmaids of truth. Whoever has no taste for the former, will generally misapprehend the latter. Art and ornament far more frequently disguise and supplant her, than add to her lustre. But what is more opposite to the taste for nature and simplicity than a fondness for pomp and vanity, for what shines and glitters? — What false estimates of the worth of objects must
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it incline a man to make ! What a wrong direction must it give to his affections and pursuits ! How is it possible, when surrounded entirely by bawbles, when totally occupied with toys, attentive only to outward, empty distinctions, completely taken up with trifles, how is it possible to give ear to the sense of truth, which in all these objects finds nothing substantial, nothing abiding, nothing worthy the man, declares them all to be childish gewgaws, would bring him back from the superficial to the intrinsic by teaching him a serious and manly course of thought, and to live as becomes a rational and immortal being ? How will he listen to the gentle voice of truth amidst the noisy occupations and amusements of vanity ? How will he particularly become a teachable, a sincere disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, who was destitute of all earthly splendour, who sought his grandeur and his excellence only in obedience to his heavenly father, in acts of beneficence and mercy ? How adopt and revere as divine truth his doctrine, which inculcates unfeigned humility and intrinsic, lasting perfection ? No ; the love of vanity is the declared enemy to the sense of truth ; has an antipathy to it, makes a mock of it and its inseparable concomitant, graceful simplicity, surpresses it, and at length extinguishes it entirely.

As little can sixthly a dissipated life be reconciled with it. By nothing, my devout hearers, and to this I beseech you particularly to attend, is the sense of truth more stunned and the sensibility to truth more obtused, than by a continued round of boisterous diversions. In such a course a man never comes properly to himself; never lives at home, but always abroad; never by strict and impartial enquiry descends into himself, but solely in others and by others judges of his own concerns. There we neither learn to know and to feel our spiritual wants, nor to consider of the best means for supplying them. There we are never duly attentive to the voice of God in nature and in revelation, and turn a deaf ear whenever by our conscience, by his spirit, he speaks with us. There we find neither time nor inclination to consider, to apply to ourselves, what we otherwise know and hear of religious concerns, for discovering light in it, or energy to the accomplishment of our duties, or to the repose and consolation of our hearts. No; silence and retirement are the best fosterers of the sense of truth. In society we are in a great measure governed by accidents, and the mind is passive to the impressions which it receives. But in solitude we are in a world of our own. We can call up what ideas and converse with what objects we please. We can say to one desire, Go; and to another, Come. Dazzled no longer with the false glitter
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of the world, we open our eyes to the beauties of that better country which is a heavenly one ; stunned no more with the noise of folly, we can listen in silence to the still, small voice. Escaped from the broad way, we set out on the narrow path. Then you can best recollect your native strength, and stir up the sense of truth which is in you. There you may discover what is really wanting to your happiness, and impartially select the proffered means for obtaining it. Then at leisure you can reflect by what allurements you were formerly foiled, that you may guard against them in the time to come ; foreseeing the evil day, you will look out for the best support when it arrives ; and putting on the whole armour of God, you will be able to resist the fiery darts of temptation, and to go forth conquering and to conquer. There alone are we enabled by meditation and prayer to draw near to the deity, the original fountain of truth, of beauty, of perfection, and in communion and intercourse with him to acquire a perpetually purer and more unerring taste for whatever is essentially true and beautiful and good. Would ye then, my dear friends, would ye cherish the sense of truth as yet not quite suppressed within you and supply it with fresh vigour ; retreat frequently as it were into yourselves ; often retire to silence and solitude. There collect your rambling thoughts ; there unfetter yourselves from the captivity of prejudice, from the fascination of
pomp

pomp and vain glory, from the tyranny of the passions ; there listen to the informations of your conscience, to the emotions of your heart, to the voice of God in nature and in his written word ; diligently attend to all their suggestions, directions, admonitions, and thus confirm yourselves in the keen and brisk apprehension of truth, in the love of virtue, in the relish for real happiness ; there ingenuously commune with yourself and with God through his son Jesus, and adhere tenaciously to that which, after calm reflection, after the strictest examination, proves to be just and proper, venerable and amiable. This will nourish and revive your sense of truth and render it continually more active and unerring.

Seventhly : with the learned, or those who devote themselves to literature, the sense of truth is but too frequently debilitated and suppressed by a particular cause. And that is erudition itself, or rather that which in common acceptation passes for erudition, and the manner wherein it is prosecuted and acquired. That is to say, too great a value by far is set upon general knowledge. Therefore, we distract, bewilder and fatigue ourselves in the several beaten tracks, frequented paths, or less explored regions of human speculation and knowledge ; collecting with insatiable avarice, true and false, definite and indefinite, useful and useless ideas and information ; heaping opinions on opinions, conjectures on conjectures ; living constantly

stantly abroad, in distant ages and countries, among nations and persons entirely foreign from us ; always forming ourselves upon the model of others ; reasoning only as others have reasoned or said : till at length we do all this almost mechanically ; and thus lose sight of ourselves, our own necessities and powers, our inward moral feelings. — — Hence it comes to pass, that the profound scholar feels himself checked and hemmed in on all sides, especially as to matters of religion. Such a number of subtile, intricate points of doctrine, such a heap of hallowed formularies, prescribed and repeated to him from his very infancy, to which he is obliged to subscribe upon oath, which he must uniformly rehearse, repeat and make the standard of truth for himself and for others. In this situation what is to excite him to reflection, to examination ? How can he, how dare he consult his inborn sense of truth, how hearken to its remonstrances, how follow its decisions ? How often will it not rather prove a hindrance to him in after-life, and how little will he therefore be inclined to foster and encourage it !

In the last place, my pious hearers, this sense of truth, particularly inasmuch as it renders us eminently capable of christianity, is very frequently weakened by the state of mind and the method in which we read the New Testament and examine the christian doctrine. And how then does this happen ? We generally read that
book

book and examine that doctrine with a head pre-occupied in extraneous matters and with a thoroughly chilled, insensible heart. On one hand we bring with us numberless ideas and trains of ideas, a variety of definitions and explications of dogmas, whole chains of inferences, of conclusions, entire systems of human wisdom all of them habitually taken for granted, or from which no one thinks himself authorised to depart; on the other hand a heart without feeling, or of worn out, dissipated, perverted feelings, no longer sensible to the charms of nature and simplicity, of innocence and virtue, only moved by art and pageantry, only vibrated by the agitation of vehement passions.— And then in that book, composed for persons of all descriptions, and breathing nothing but nature and noble simplicity, we look for the studied art of the learned, the style of the rhetorician or the philosopher, the method and forms of the schools, a system of human wisdom, information concerning numberless things, that we have no need to know, answers to innumerable questions, which without any injury might remain unanswered for ever; and on not finding all this, we take no interest either in the subject matter of that book or the manner in which it is delivered, read it not often enough, nor with sufficient attention and impartiality for making ourselves acquainted with the spirit of it; and accordingly feel neither the importance, nor the truth, nor the felicity of the doctrine

doctrine which it contains. — — No, my dear friends; are you desirous that the sense of truth should lead you to christianity by rendering you thoroughly qualified for the reception of it, lay not so many obstacles in its way, particularly in the perusal of the gospel. Let it work freely without molestation upon you. Read those sacred, consolatory records with an inquisitive unbiassed mind, as a child peruses the communications and precepts of his father, a friend the accounts of the life, discourses and actions of his friend, a subject the laws of the body-politic to which he belongs; and compare what ye so read, not with the opinions and systems of men, but with the feelings of your heart, with the judgment of your sound understanding, with your own wants and interests, with what ye are and what ye may hope and expect to be and to become. Thus let your mind and your heart stand open to the voice of Jesus and to the impressions, which his character, his information, his actions and the events of his life shall make upon you; there seek not art, but nature; not ornament, but noble simplicity; not ostentation and show, but mild and genial light; not food for an idle curiosity, but the satisfaction of real urgent wants; not institutes of literature, but directions to practical wisdom and to happiness: and then let your sense of truth, your sensibility to truth decide, whether ye do not there
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find all this, and so find it that ye may safely and contentedly rely upon it.

And now, my devout audience, since we must hasten to a conclusion, are we to be surprised, that the sense of truth is weakened and suppressed in such numbers of mankind, that it is and effects only among a few, what it ought to be and to effect? Oh what accumulated injury and mischief may, must in all respects accrue from a wrong education, a faulty tuition, the excessive fondness for imitation, the servile compliance with those affections to which all thoughts of religion are so unwelcome and grievous, the prevailing love of vanity, a life of continued dissipation, the abuse of learning and the preposterous method of reading the scriptures and investigating the christian doctrine! Oh let us then henceforth combat and avoid these errors, remove these impediments to christianity, to salvation; and if we ourselves cannot restore our sense of truth to its pristine purity and vigour, impaired as it has been by our own negligence and folly, yet let us caution, and as much as possible guard our younger, less practised, less corrupted brethren and sisters against the same mistakes, that by them the kingdom of truth may be amplified and established, and the full efficacy and felicity of christianity be gloriously displayed! Amen.

SERMON LVI.

The Christian a singular Character, in a good sense of the expression.

G^{OD}, with what privileges hast thou endowed us as christians! How much more light, how much more ^{excitation} and energy to good, prospects in futurity how much more reviving hast thou vouchsafed to us, than to so many others who have not the happiness to be christians! And what might and should we not be and afford, did we but properly know how to esteem and to use our advantages! What wise, virtuous, good, blessed persons should we be! Ah forgive us, merciful Father, that in all these respects we are still so far behind, that we still are not more worthy of the honour to be called thy children and disciples and followers of thy son Jesus! Grant that we may perceive and feel, what peculiarly strong obligations we are under to lead a devout and holy life, how much more it is incumbent upon us than on others, and assist us by thy powerful

erful aid to correspond with these obligations better than we have hitherto done, and really to be and to do that which as Christians we ought to be and to do. Bless to that ~~and~~ our reflections on this subject, by working in us a salutary contrition, encouragement and resolution, such as may render us willing and apt to all good. Surely trusting in thy mercy, through the promises of thy son Jesus Christ, we conclude our petitions to thee in his blessed name. Our father, &c.

MATTH. v. 46, 47.

If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye; do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?

THE dread of being thought a singular sort of person, is one of the most general and powerful springs of human conduct, especially in societies which have attained to a certain degree of politeness. The prime cause of it lies in our early education, which generally speaking is in this respect very erroneous. We rarely allow the human mind to expand itself gradually, by contenting ourselves with procuring it the necessary opportunities and means to that end, and removing some impediments, which it would not be able alone to surmount. Seldom is it allowed to take its own course, the most natural and easy to it, so
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that we should act only as its conductors and guardians, one while throwing out a caution, then if perplexed setting it right, or sometimes if it go too far out of the way, and approach too near to danger, leading it back. Seldom is it permitted to see surrounding objects and to feel and judge of the impressions which they make upon it, as it is able of itself to see and to feel and to judge of them. The child, or the youth scarcely out of his childhood, is required to see and hear and think and judge and speak and act, just so and no otherwise than as his guide, his tutor and his ordinary companions do: to whom he is constantly referred, whom he is recommended to copy in point of gestures and dress, manners and customs, looks, words and actions, to become more and more like them, till at last the resemblance is complete. He must esteem that alone beautiful, good, becoming, covetable, only prize or contempt, praise or blame, seek or shun, love or hate that which is held up to him under these descriptions and towards which he perceives others to be thus affected and thus to behave. Thus are all his sentiments, sensations, affections, actions, judgments, opinions to be formed and stunted to a certain pattern, cast as it were into particular mould, and even the method in which he is to disclose them, is to be marked with the stamp of the company he keeps. If this succeed, and he has attained to the supposed pinnacle of perfection,

tion, he is then a wellbred man, polite, accomplished, will soon acquire the ease and freedom of the great world, may be presented in any company and be sure of a courteous reception. If it do not succeed, if he depart more or less from this adopted standard of wisdom, of propriety, of good manners, he is pointed at as an oddity, is excluded from many companies, regarded in most others with looks of disdain or with total indifference, and in many respects has ruined his fortune in the world. Indeed, if the child or the youth in this mode of treatment had only to do with wise and good persons, he would be no loser by it, and would grow up in wisdom and goodness. If however he live among unwise and bad, or extremely defective and weak, rather bad than good persons, how has he any chance of becoming wiser and better than the examples before him? Hence it arises, that in such societies there is so great and to persons of reflection so tiresome a uniformity in opinions, sentiments, tempers and manners, and that errors, prejudices, follies, failings, vices of various kinds so easily and so long prevail. Hence likewise it arises, that we so greatly dread the charge of singularity, and had rather adopt every error, comply with every folly, elevate every fault into a virtue, consent to every vice, than become obnoxious to that reproach. But now whether such a conduct is consistent with wisdom, with christianity, my devout hearers, is a question

tion which well deserves our inquiry. Let us fix upon christianity, which is essential wisdom, but superior wisdom, nay the highest wisdom whereof we are capable.

Our saviour in the text says to his disciples: If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? What is there extraordinary in that? How does that entitle you to any reward? This question obviously presupposes, that the disciple of Jesus, the sincere christian, should be and do more than others, that he should be in a good acceptance of the term a singular character, that he should differ, distinguish himself from others, and in several respects excel them. And thus in fact, it is, my pious audience. The christian must not be afraid of the imputation of singularity, if he would properly assert the name he bears. He must do more than others, and what he does he must do in a better, more dignified manner than others do. He must therefore in a good sense of the term be a singular character.

The christian, I say, must do more, more for himself and more for others than the rest of mankind, who are called christians, but are not, are wont to do. First therefore more for himself. How differently must he work at his improvement, towards his perfection, towards his happiness, than the great bulk of mankind! How differently must he be concerned in the accomplishment of his duties, than those who are not christians!

tians! How many things must he abstain from, how many others must he observe, which in the eyes of most men are absolutely indifferent, which in their opinion may without scruple be either done or left undone, neglected or observed! For escaping the punishments of the world to come, or in order to be saved, the generality of mankind do indeed something, one more, another less. For who does not wish to be saved? And who is so infatuated as to imagine, that in this respect nothing at all need be done? Indeed too many people do with regard to it as little as ever they can, as though they were afraid of being too sure of salvation and of attaining it too soon and in too high a degree. At any rate however we do something. We frequent the public worship, submit to be instructed in the will of God, listen to the doctrines of the christian religion, and listen to them sometimes not without approbation, not without satisfaction, we confess these doctrines with our lips, say our prayers daily, steer clear of heinous offences, maintain a decent character, and occasionally do a good action.— But in all this, what do we more than others? Are there not hypocrites, are there not slanderers, impostors, adulterers, villains enough, who do all this — who do it perhaps more punctually, more diligently? Did not also the pagan worship his deities? Did not he take an interest in the solemnities of his religion or his superstition? Did not

not the jew likewise visit his temple? Brought he not sacrifices and oblations and holocausts to the altar of his God? Were there not jews, were there not pagans in abundance, who held their religion sacred, who observed all its rites and ordinances with reverence and devotion, who to propitiate the deity imposed on themselves a variety of penances, submitted to many restraints, and complied with numerous inconvenient and disagreeable practices? What do ye then as christians more than these, my devout hearers, in frequenting the public worship, in keeping the festivals, in attending the sacrament, in daily rehearsing particular forms of prayer, in abstaining on stated days from certain entertainments or excesses, and distributing alms to others? — — No; if ye would justly bear the title of christians, if ye would practically and in good earnest be disciples of the holy Jesus, ye must do more than this. To worship God, to please him, to do his will, to become progressively wiser and better and more capable of salvation, must be not your by-work but your main concern. Your religion and devotion must not be confined to stated hours or quarters of hours, not separated from your other habits of thought and action; they must be the companions, the regulators of your whole life. You must constantly walk in the presence of God, all must remind you of him, lead you to him, rejoice and solace you with the apprehension of him.

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The memory and the example of Jesus, your great antecessor and pattern, must never be strangers to your mind, must every day as well as on those set apart for the solemn memorial of him, guide, conduct, in doubtful cases determine you, and constantly yield you satisfaction and energy in all goodness. The future world and your expectations in it must be present to you both in health and in sickness, in prosperity as in adversity, and have a perpetual influence on your determinations and actions, on your hopes and fears. You must even at present in some sense have your conversation in heaven, and it must be plainly seen, your deportment must testify, that ye are here not settlers but only pilgrims and sojourners, and know and are bound to a better country.

The case is the same, my pious hearers, with the accomplishment of the duties, which are incumbent upon us in our several relations. How few persons are there comparatively, who are so depraved or perverse as directly and in all respects to fly in the face of their duties as men, as citizens, as subjects, as heads of families, as members of society, and to be totally indifferent as to right and wrong, honour and infamy? Who is not on his guard against the commission of downright fraud and manifest injustice? Who does not shudder at the opprobrious character of a liar, a slanderer, a malicious, a wicked, a quarrelsome man? Who provides not more or less for his children

children and family? Who does not on certain occasions more or less for the general welfare? Who would not wish to be thought diligent and industrious in his calling, faithful in the execution of his office or trust? Did not the jews the same? Did not the heathens the same? Do not at present millions of persons, who know nothing of christianity, the same? And if ye now break off there, — what do ye more than they? No; would ye justly bear the style of christians, would ye be practically and in good earnest disciples of the innocent Jesus, of him who was entirely devoted to righteousness and virtue, ye must likewise in this respect do more than others. Your duty must be sacred and inviolable to you in its utmost extent, at all times, in all circumstances, under all temptations to the contrary; and every infringement of it, though all the world should approve or excuse it, be far from you. The most secret fraud must be just as odious to you as the most open violence: the dictates and demands of your conscience as authoritative and compulsory as the laws of the temporal magistrate: the omission of good as criminal as the commission of evil: the duty to which you are not bound by oath and which nobody can compel you to fulfil, equally important and obligatory with those, the neglect whereof would brand you with the disgrace of perjury. The affairs of your vocation, which cost you pains and inconvenience and expense, but which how-
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ever belong to your vocation, should be no less punctually transacted, than those which are far more agreeable and entertaining to you and bring you certain profit. The concern for your children should extend to their mind and their heart, to the preservation of their innocence and their manuduction to real integrity, as much and far more than to their health and their future success in the world. In short, to keep a good, undefiled conscience before God and man; always to employ our capacities and powers in the best manner, the manner most agreeable to God; to be diligent in following what is just and proper, laudable and honourable, to cultivate wisdom and virtue, and in all this to become continually more apt and expert; to avoid all appearance of evil as well as evil itself; to cleanse our heart, as well as to improve our conduct; and to do so in solitude as in society, under the censure as amid the applause of the world, in awful as in encouraging circumstances, before the invisible eyes of the Omniscient as in the presence of the austere human witness and judge: this is called fulfilling our duties as a christian; this is called, by the accomplishment of them, to distinguish oneself from the great multitude of those, who are not christians, or are only so in name.

The christian however should do more for others, than the rest of mankind are wont to do. Where is the depraved, the shameless, the ob-
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durate wretch, who absolutely refuses to afford any kind offices to his fellow-creature? Who is not occasionally impelled by mere animal sympathy to assist the distressed and to relieve the indigent? Who does not sometimes give alms to the poor? Who does not sometimes support the weak? Who loves not those who love him, who does not often repay benefits with benefits, requite civilities by civilities? Who forgives not the offender that humbles himself before him and feels the superiority of the injured? Who is not submissive to his patron and protector, on whom perhaps the whole of his welfare depends? Who is not indulgent to such persons, with whom he cannot easily dispense, or whom, whether he will or not, he must have as partners in his fortunes? Who denies not himself, endures and does not many things for his friend? What jew, what heathen did not the same? And who that is not a christian would refuse to do so? What do ye then extraordinary, my christian auditors, if ye deal thus and no otherwise by your neighbour? No; the christian, who would be so practically and in good earnest, must also in this respect do more than others. — Would ye therefore be christians and as such do more than others, do good then to your brethren not merely from your superfluity, leave to them not merely what ye yourselves can by no means make use of, what perhaps would be an incumbrance to you, but contract

tract your desires, that ye may be able to do more good. To be a christian and deny oneself nothing for the sake of others, to be unwilling to sacrifice anything to their benefit, seems to me a solecism in terms. He that procures himself all possible accommodations and enjoys all kinds of amusements, according to his rank and fortune, and which in the opinion of the world he may innocently enjoy, but never deprives himself of any accommodation or pleasure, never stints himself in pomp, in any vain, ostentatious expense for the sake of others, may be called bountiful and liberal by the world, which in this as in most other particulars it is no hard matter to satisfy, may be loaded with its praises and panegyrics; but will he be therefore a true, genuine christian, a follower of Jesus, who lived so much more for others than for himself? Would ye further be christians and as such do more than others; then love not only your friends, or those who love you, but according to the express injunction of Jesus, bless your enemies, who curse you, do good to them who hate you, pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.—Would ye be christians and as such do more than others; then forgive not him alone, who laments his misdoing and humbles himself before you, but also him who refuses to acknowledge his iniquity; not only him who has offended you for the first time, but also him who has often, who has seventy times seven times

times offended you ; not only him, who by some incautious expression, by some harsh and precipitate judgment, by an accidental want of respect, by some breach of good manners has caused you a few disagreeable moments or hours, but also him who has sensibly injured you and perhaps purloined or ravished from you a part of your property. — Would ye be christians and as such do more than others ; then not only suffer not the hungry, the naked, the miserable to perish, who ask assistance of you and whom you can relieve, but run with alacrity also to the relief of your ignorant, erroneous, vicious, comfortless, doubting brethren, and mediate or immediately set them right, as you have opportunity and ability to do it ; — provide not only for their outward and bodily, but also, as much as in you lies, for the spiritual wants of your brethren, not only for their advancement in this world, but also for their happiness in the next. — Would ye be christians and as such do more than others ; then do no injury to your neighbour not only as to his property, or his health, or his life, but avoid likewise and abstain from whatever may be prejudicial to him respecting his knowledge, his principles, his faith, his virtue, his tranquillity, his hopes, whatever may deprive him of any incentive to goodness or any ground of consolation. — Would ye be christians and as such do more than others ; then serve and assist your neighbour, promote the general interest

interest of society, not only when it can be done without any trouble to you, or when it brings you honour and fame, or when you have the example of others before you; but even when it costs you pains and labour, causes you uneasiness, brings upon you censure, when you must go an unbeaten track and do and bear all this without any visible good consequences. — Would ye be christians and as such do more than others; then not only do many things for others or for the benefit of others, but bear and suffer likewise for others, as Jesus bore and suffered for us; take upon you occasionally reproach, trouble, contradiction, privation, affronts, that properly apply not to you, but some other; remove here or there a smaller or greater obstacle and difficulty out of the way, which would prove a stumbling block, not to you, but to others; rather let the taste, the inclinations, the manners of others, when they relate to innocent objects, impose limitation and restraint upon you, than by the full exercise of your liberty you should confine and lay a restraint upon them. This, my dear friends, is truly christian affection and virtue, the discipline of Jesus in the proper and strict import of the word.

To conclude, the christian who would be of a truly christian temper, must not only do more for himself and for others or to the promotion of his own and the general interest, than persons who are not christians are wont to do, but he must do

it likewise from better and nobler principles than they. From what motives do they who are not christians, or who are not actuated by the true spirit of christianity, usually perform those good or generally useful actions? From what motives do they provide for the salvation of their soul and for the happiness of their brethren? What impels them to it? What guides them in it? One while they do it from a servile dread of God and the punishments of the future world; then in order to acquire praise and honour among mankind. Now they would make atonement by it for certain sins and iniquities that disturb them; then they would purchase by it some particular temporal blessing or protection, or favour of providence. Now they are wrought upon by the presence and the example of certain persons on whose esteem they lay some stress; then some fortunate accident convincingly represents to them the propriety, the beauty, the respectability of the good act. Now they would only put an end to the importunate petitions of the poor, to the uneasiness created by the sight of the distressed; then they are desirous of acquiring patrons, friends, dependants, slaves, or of paving the way to some particular dignities, posts or similar objects. — What good they do is rarely done with real pleasure, from inward feeling and conviction, with hearty satisfaction: seldom is it done by them without some private extrinsic reason and motive: seldom

seldom without inward repugnance, without more or less opposition from their heart. Seldom do they anticipate the prayer of the poor and needy : seldom do they grant it in a truly generous and noble manner, so as not to confuse the petitioner, and to let the relief retain its entire value. Seldom do they take so much pleasure in these things, as to be fond of dwelling on them, as to recollect them with satisfaction, and to rejoice whenever the means and opportunities for repeating them increase. Some act on such occasions solely from formality : some from ostentation, some purely from mean self-interest. Therefore they are so seldom consistent, and are at different times, in different places and in different situations such very different persons. I will not positively affirm that the good which is done in this manner is evil, not absolutely deny it to have any value, and not look for complete purity and perfection where nothing is completely pure and perfect. A question or two however I must put to you, my devout hearers. If ye do good only in this manner, from such motives, in such views, what do ye extraordinary ? What jew, what pagan could do it less generously, less meritoriously ? And what christian as such should satisfy himself with it ? No ; would ye be christians, would ye be disciples and followers of Jesus, you must be actuated by quite different motives, guided by quite different principles, governed by quite different

views. — Not fear, but love should be the main spring of your moral conduct; love towards God should be the source and the nourishment of your goodness and your worship; love towards man the motive and the rule of your beneficence and your utility. The desire to please God, and to be approved of him, the arbiter of the universe, should have far, far more weight with you than the praise and censure of the world. The approbation of your conscience, satisfaction with yourself, the sentiment of intrinsic goodness and perfection should have far greater validity with you and reward you for every good action far more than all outward possessions and distinctions. To the example and pattern of your lord every other example should yield, to the honour of being his follower every other honour should give way. It should not be a trouble, a constraint to you, but a pleasure and satisfaction to do what is just and becoming. You should cheerfully give, without any view to compensation; cheerfully serve, without requiring to be served in return; cheerfully prevent the petitioner and spare him every kind of humiliation; cheerfully do good in secret and never be weary in well-doing. Ye must invariably follow the same principles and rule of conduct, the dictates of the gospel; as the means of harmonizing your sentiments and giving consistency to your actions. This, my devout hearers, this is what is meant by doing good like a christian, that
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is, from better, nobler, motives, than others, than the generality of mankind are wont to do. He who thus thinks and acts, is in the best acceptance of the word a singular character, as separating himself from the mass of fools and sinners, distinguishing himself from the less wise and good, and may rejoice in all the privileges of christianity with a view to perfection and felicity present and future. Oh let us all, my dear friends, exert ourselves to the utmost to obtain those privileges ! They alone are deserving of our most zealous, unabating exertions : they alone are real privileges in the eyes of the wise and upright and even in the infallible judgment of God : they alone retain even in heaven the same value they have now on earth : and only thus, only in consequence of such a temper and disposition can we bear without disgrace the name of christian, only thus can we glory in our fellowship with Jesus and rejoice in his second advent, and with it in the hope that he will then acknowledge us for his, for his genuine adherents and followers, and as such admit us into his heavenly kingdom.

Advent.

SERMON LVII.

*Application of the Question : What do ye more
than others ?*

GOD, our most benign and gracious Father, how great, how unwearied is thy beneficence to us, thy frail and indigent children ! 'Thou never deniest us what is truly profitable for us. Never dost thou cease to bless us, and to do us good. And with how great privileges hast thou endowed us both in temporals and in spirituals beyond so many of our brethren, who like us are thy children ! How much more easy and pleasant to us hast thou thus rendered the journey of life and the prosecution and attainment of our ultimate object ! Oh that our gratitude to thee bore a better, a juster proportion to thy bounty ! That we were as much distinguished by virtue and piety from our brethren, as thou hast distinguished us from them by benefits and advantages ! That our obedience to thee were as unbounded and continued, as the effects of thy benevolence to us ! Oh, most merciful, most affectionate Father, continue

tinue to add grace to grace, bounty to bounty ; teach us properly to perceive and to feel the magnitude of thy benefits and the value of the privileges with which thou hast favoured us, and always to employ them as is well-pleasing unto thee. Assist us to fulfil our duties, faithfully and cheerfully to fulfil them, and grant that we may be continually advancing on the path of christian perfection. Grant that the reflections which are now to occupy our minds may by thy blessing promote these views ; let them excite in us a salutary sense of shame at our negligence and sloth and rouse us to renovated ardour in goodness. These our petitions we offer up to thee as the disciples and votaries of thy son Jesus, and as directed by him, address thee further in his name. Our father, &c.

MATTH. V. 46, 47.

If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ; do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ; do not even the publicans so ?

PROPORTIONABLY to the superior advantages of any kind that we possess, my pious auditors, the greater obligations are we under to a particularly wise and virtuous carriage ; the more means and motives and opportunities have we to that end. Unto whomsoever much is given, as we read in the gospel, of him shall much be required ;

quired ; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. According to this sound maxim, my dear friends, we should all be particularly wise and virtuous, because we all are favoured with various advantages beyond the generality of mankind. As christians we possess the greatest advantages above those who are not christians. The knowledge of the only true God ; just, consoling ideas of this God and of his relations and dispositions to mankind ; the lessons of an infallible teacher of truth ; the help of a deliverer and mediator sent to us from God ; the knowledge of the road to happiness, the encouragement of a sure, a faithful leader and precursor, and the support of a powerful assistance on that road ; acquiescence in a wise and parental providence, ever active and extending over all ; a renewed and invigorated sentiment of the human dignity ; assurance of the forgiveness of every sin that we heartily lament and which has no more dominion over us, and of forbearance with all unavoidable failings and infirmities ; the sure and certain hope of a better, an everlasting life after the death of the body : what special advantages ! And how great the obligations to superior virtue, to purer rectitude ! As members of the particular christian society to which we belong, we have likewise considerable advantages above many other less favoured christian societies. More instruction, better instruction, no compulsion of con-
science,

science, no bonds of superstition and servile awe, no reservation or distortion of the christian verity, a worship not burdened with empty ceremonies and troublesome bodily exercises, not a joyless and gloomy morality, not a faith opposed and derogatory to sound reason; but leisure, means, encouragements to reflection, to examination, to continual progress in all salutary knowledge and wisdom, a brighter, even path to virtue and to happiness: how great the advantages given us by all this over so many other christians, who in many respects still sit in darkness, sigh under various yokes, feel themselves hemmed in and enthralled on all sides, and in their efforts after perfection are restrained by so many more impediments and difficulties! And how great the obligations hence imposed on us to a superior virtue and a purer devotion! As, by being christians however, and members of a peculiar society of christians, we have or at least may have several great advantages in common, my devout hearers, so likewise many of us are again endowed with other privileges above their fellow-christians of the same communion, several are placed by providence in circumstances particularly propitious, several are under peculiar obligations to gratitude and to fervency in goodness; and likewise these advantages, circumstances, motives should be so employed by everyone as that by them he may become proportionably wiser and better and more generally

generally useful, than he could be without them. Let us therefore, my pious auditors, also in this respect put to our hearts the question of Jesus in our text: What do ye more than others? How do ye employ your particular advantages, how do ye answer your particular obligations, and what do ye more than those of your brethren, who possess not these advantages, these means and motives to goodness?

To seven classes of persons I would put this important question: to the eminently endowed and independent; to the eminently intelligent; to the eminently respected; to the eminently prosperous in various respects; to the eminently disciplined by various trials and misfortunes; to those who became good betimes; and to those who returned to the path of virtue and happiness not till late in life.

Ye therefore, my pious hearers, who are not repressed and confined by any stated laborious occupation, by any cares about procuring a livelihood, have no peculiar business, who live in opulence or at least in flourishing or easy circumstances and are masters of your time and your property: What do ye extraordinary? What do ye more than others? How do you distinguish yourselves in providing for the perfection of your mind, for the purification and improvement of your heart, for the happiness of your brethren, of those who are obliged to eat their bread in the sweat of their brow, are sighing under the yoke
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of servitude and must be so busily and continually occupied in earning the meat which perisheth, that little leisure and ability are left them to labour for that meat which nourishes the mind, and endureth unto everlasting life? How do ye employ your greater independence? How do ye employ your time, how do ye employ your property? Do ye afford others the more voluntary service, the less bounden service they can demand of you? Do ye endeavour with greater punctuality to fulfil the general duties incumbent on you as men, as christians, as members of the society to which ye belong, the less you are impeded in it by the particular functions of office or the affairs of a calling? Do ye freely and readily take upon you such concerns, as would either be burdensome to others who have a stated business to mind, or could be but very imperfectly attended to by them? Do ye care and work the more willingly and zealously for others, the less you need to be solicitous and to work for yourselves? Do ye reckon every opportunity to serve and be useful to others, a divine call to do so, and do ye find in your hearts and in your consciences that motive which neither office nor duty could give you? — Being rich in gold and silver, are ye therefore rich also in good works? Do ye lay up for yourselves treasures in the future world, and are ye never weary of this sort of accumulation? Is it your glory to be like him of old, that tried
friend

friend of virtue, who was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a staff to the weak, a father to the fatherless, the defender of the oppressed, the deliverer of the poor and needy? Do ye, not essentially, but proportionably more good than the poor, or than such as are in moderate circumstances? — And how do ye employ your greater leisure? Do ye pass the more time in rational christian exercises of devotion? Do ye the more carefully cultivate your mind by extending and rectifying your knowledge? Do ye labour more attentively and assiduously at the improvement of your heart? Do ye prepare yourselves the more earnestly and diligently for the great day of account and for your transition into the superior life, the fewer detentions from so doing you meet with from your outward circumstances? Happy the affluent and independent man, who thus employs his wealth and his independence! He is deserving of those endowments! Distinguished above others by wealth and independence, he is also distinguished above them by justice and liberality and unwearied exertions after higher perfection; and though hereafter he lose the former, the fruits of the latter will never be taken from him.

Eminently favoured and eminently obliged again are those, who excel others in capacities and endowments of the mind. Ye therefore, my pious hearers, who are adorned with such distinctions,

tions, who feel more acutely, who think more vigorously, whose understanding is more comprehensive, whose sagacity is more penetrating, whose judgment is more sound, whose memory is more retentive, and who can exert your mental powers more unimpededly, more freely, more continuedly, more successfully than others : what do ye extraordinary ? How do ye employ those superior endowments ? What do ye better, more useful, than they who possess fewer capacities and abilities of that kind ? Are ye proportionably further advanced in the knowledge of truth, of religion, of christianity ? Are truth, religion and christianity the more interesting and sacred to you, in proportion as the light in which ye behold them is more bright and serene ? — What rule do ye follow in the application of your capacities and intellectual abilities ? Do ye prefer the important to the unimportant, the substantial to the shining, the useful to the curious, the true to the specious, the good to the beautiful ? What is the most favourite subject of your thoughts ? What sort of investigations or meditations procures you the most satisfaction ? With what do ye most delight to stock your memory ? — What influence have your superior capacities and clearer perceptions on your sentiments and your conduct ? Do ye form juster estimates of the value of things, of the affairs of this life, of the concerns and proper end of man, of the analogy between

tween the present and the future ? Is your worship, are your exercises of devotion the more rational, refined and exalted, do your mind and your heart take a greater interest in them, the easier it is for you to elevate your thoughts above visible objects, and to employ them on whatever is grand and worthiest of human sentiment and affection ? — Do ye readily communicate your light to others ? Do ye lend them your superior abilities without vanity and without selfish views ? Do ye readily occupy them in informing the ignorant, correcting the misguided, counselling the unwary, and assisting the friends of truth in their researches after it ? Do ye esteem it in general your bounden duty, and do ye make it your occupation, as often and as much as ye can, to enlarge the kingdom of light among mankind, to combat baneful prejudices and errors, to increase the common stock or bank of useful knowledge and by all means to promote the cause of true religion and active christianity ? — Are ye in short the more virtuous, the more intelligent ye are ? Do ye good the more zealously and completely, the better ye understand it ? Do ye walk the more circumspectly and wisely, the more clearly ye are able to foresee the remoter consequences of your behaviour ? Are truth and order as much observed in your heart and life as in your intellect ? — Only by such a conduct can ye attain the ends for which God has endowed you with superior capacities

capacities and intellectual abilities. Only thus will ye promote your own real perfection and happiness and that of your brethren, come off with honour at the great day of account and retribution, and qualify yourselves then for a still more resplendent light and for a still greater influence in the diffusion of it.

Also ye thirdly, my pious hearers, who are looked up to with particular respect by your fellow-creatures on account of your superior endowments and merits, whom we are more fain to believe, more fain to trust, more fain to follow than others, whose judgment and example are of far greater weight in society, than the judgment and the example of most other members of it: how do ye employ those preferences? What do ye in this respect extraordinary? Are ye the more careful not to abuse by any means the confidence reposed in you by others, the greater and more unbounded it is? Do ye decide the less precipitately in doubtful cases, the more apt we are to rely upon your decisions without further examination and bow to them as the decrees of reason and truth? In your judgments, in your recommendations, in the distribution of your praise and your censure are ye the more cautious by how much these judgments, these recommendations, these praises, these censures are of the greater weight solely because they come from you? Do ye lay a severer restraint
on

on yourselves even in harmless indulgences, but which are very liable to abuse, the more apt we are to appeal to you and to approve and to do, what you are seen to do? Are ye the more circumspect in the whole tenour of your conduct, in proportion as your example has the greater influence on others? — — But on the other hand likewise do ye boldly and liberally employ your consequence, wherever it may prevent mischief or effect and promote beneficial designs? Do ye never fail, at proper times, and as often as ye can do it with any hope of success, to oppose predominant and current prejudices and errors, to bear testimony to disowned or even persecuted truth, and to resist every public abuse, every vice and every folly, that raises its head? Do ye make it your duty and delight to plead in behalf of modest and despised virtue, to bring into notice concealed merit, to defend the cause of oppressed or injured innocence, to vindicate the rights of humanity against every violation or infringement of them, to unmask the impostor and the villain, and to do all this without regard to station and dignity, to wealth and power, to elevated rank and meanness of condition? — Do ye chiefly employ your consequence in rendering virtue and religion and christianity respectable, and by the manner in which ye judge of them and are disposed towards them, induce others to adopt such adequate judgments and dispositions? Are ye in this respect

spect the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and do ye without vanity on one hand and without false delicacy on the other let the light of your faith and your good works so shine before men, that they may glorify your father in heaven? This, my dear friends, this is properly to employ one's consequence, putting it out to interest as a talent entrusted to us by God and thus preparing our way to superior consequence and to greater influence in a better world.

I next turn to a fourth class of persons, who being eminently favoured of God are thereby obliged to an eminent zeal and diligence in goodness; and herein I comprehend you, my pious hearers, who have been peculiarly prosperous in various respects, to whom God has given peculiar proofs of his protection or succour, whom he has perhaps recovered from dangerous sicknesses, from peril of death, from cruel distress, to whom he has restored children, possessions, honour or other comforts, which ye had given up for lost; you I interrogate: What do ye extraordinary? Wherein do ye distinguish yourselves from those who in similar cases have been less fortunate than you? Are ye the more grateful, the more constant in your obedience to God and in the discharge of your duty, in proportion as the benefits ye have received are more extraordinary and conspicuous? Have ye the Lord always before you, whose peculiar presence ye have so remarkably experi-

enced, and who was so nigh to you with his aid when you were encompassed with darkness and horror? Do ye honour that all-powerful being, who came to your relief and deliverance, with a more steady faith, with a more truly filial and unshaken confidence? Is the God who so graciously heard you, when you called upon him in your trouble, is prayer, is converse with him now to you a more agreeable occupation? Have ye truly paid the vows which ye made to him in the time of need? Do ye now employ your time, your faculties, your life the more assiduously in your amendment, in doing acts of justice and humanity, in finishing your work on earth, as the danger you were in of losing them was more imminent, as ye are more assured by experience, how uncertain this time is, how soon your strength may decline and your faculties decay, how little ye can depend on the continuance of your life? Do ye the more assiduously prepare for death by faith and virtue, the nearer ye are to it, and the more ardently ye then perhaps wished to be fitter for a comfortable passage into the other world? Have ye dedicated the property, the children, the honour, the health, the life, which God has recovered for you and contrary to all expectation restored to you again, to your helper and deliverer, the more sensibly ye feel that they properly belong to him, and that they are only lent to you for a longer or a shorter time? Thus, my dear friends,

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should the eminently favoured distinguish themselves from their brethren and do more than they, by signal gratitude towards their sovereign benefactor, if they would not forfeit the protection of providence by their own unworthiness.

But likewise of you, my pious hearers, more is fitly expected, to you also the question, what do ye extraordinary? is applicable, who by various uncommon, perhaps more adverse than propitious circumstances and events, have been more exercised than others, have gained greater experience and had stronger incentives to the employment of your intellectual faculties and to your moral improvement. Either you yourself, for instance, or some of your family, have been visited by sickness or other calamities. Now one of your best laid plans, one of your wisest measures, is totally disconcerted; then your best exertions and fairest endeavours are made without apparent success. Then again some fortuitous concurrence of extraordinary circumstances, has preserved you from imminent danger, has procured you some no less considerable than unlooked for advantage, and put you in possession of certain objects, the attainment whereof you had no reason to expect at all, or not for a long time to come, or not so completely to your satisfaction.— Perhaps you may have passed many years of your youth or your manhood under pressures of one kind or other, in indigent circumstances, with no cheering pro-

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spects

spects before you. Perhaps you have hitherto laboured under bodily complaints, perhaps your life has been embittered by mental sufferings. Perhaps you have been subject to particular vicissitudes and disappointments in regard to station and the goods of fortune. — Ye have therefore had personal experiences of the instability and the vanity of earthly things on one hand, and of the over-ruling providence of your God and father in heaven, on the other. Ye have had peculiar occasions and motives for acquiring habits of reflection, of seriousness, of a lively apprehension of your dependence on God, of moderation and patience, of practice in all the christian virtues. — These, strange as it may sound, are so many advantages, which ye have had in preference to many others; inasmuch as they are means to superior perfection. As it is written, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. And how have ye not regarded and employed these advantages? What fruit have these trials and exercises produced in you? What do you in this respect extraordinary? — Is your tenacity to secular objects relaxed? Is your heart more disengaged from the visible and the present? Do ye the more steadily fix your view on God and the determinations of his providence? Are ye the less obstinately bent on following your own inclinations and affections? Have ye made the greater progress in self-denial and self-

self-command, in christian patience, in trust in God, in the undaunted and disinterested discharge of your duty? Are ye more ardent in the pursuit of intrinsic perfection and the possessions of the world to come? Is your virtue the more pure and exalted, your contentment become more independent on extraneous objects? Can ye boast with the apostle: I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. — Thus alone can we be said to live consistently with the state of probation and discipline in which we here are placed; wisely to make progress in the school where we are taught of God, and to walk the rough but shorter way pointed out to us by him for attaining to our perfection, so as not to fail of the prize.

I address myself sixthly to you, my pious hearers, who have had the happiness of a particularly virtuous and religious education, whom God has preserved from your youth up from the commission of flagrant enormities and transgressions, whom he guided betimes along the path of virtue and goodness, to whom he gave wise and honest teachers and governors and companions, and whom he never suffered to be entirely indifferent to religion and christianity. How great are your advantages and how great the obligations, which

in consequence of them are incumbent upon you! And in what manner now have ye employed these advantages? What do ye respecting them extraordinary? Are ye become from children youths, from youths adults in christianity, from probationers are ye become tried and confirmed christians? Are ye the more tenacious of your principles, the longer ye have found them to be just; the less liable to yield to temptation, the more power of resistance ye have acquired by practice and the oftener ye have gained the victory over it; the more jealous of your moral, your christian liberty, the longer and the more effectually ye have asserted it? Is your virtue proportionately become more pure and cheerful; your piety the more childlike and ingenuous; your devotion the more spiritual and exalted; your faith the more firm; your hope the more immovable? Do ye walk the road of christian perfection with the greater boldness and resolution, and do ye the more visibly advance towards the term of it, as you meet with the fewer impediments, and the more pleasure and satisfaction ye have already enjoyed upon it? — Are justice and beneficence become a second nature, a delight to you? Are even the weightier duties of christianity grown easy to you? Does it cost you as little effort to forgive your enemies and to do good to the ungrateful, as it costs others to be obliging to their friends and to afford relief to the deserving? — Is
love,

love, not fear; love to God and man, the moving spring of your whole deportment? Are not only your actions become constantly more blameless and better, but also the views you had in them, always purer, and the inducements to them always nobler and more in the true genius of christianity? Do you really honour the precepts of the gospel by the manner in which you practise them, and particularly by the pleasant and cheerful temper in which you practise them? Do you shine as lights in the midst of the perverse generation of this world? Are you the less shy of wisdom, of virtue, of godliness, do ye reckon their acquaintance the more honourable to you, do you attach yourselves the more zealously to them, the longer they have been your companions along the path of life, the oftener they have preserved you, set you right, encouraged, comforted and pacified your mind? — Such should be the natural consequences and fruits of an early piety. They therefore may be expected and required of you, whom God has favoured with this distinction, and only when you have made such progress in goodness will you not be startled at the question in our text: What do ye more than others?

But lastly you are likewise particularly favoured and therefore under particular obligations, you, my pious hearers, whom God has at length brought to reflection in an advanced age; and at a time of
 life

life when substantial and lasting amendment is so difficult and so rare, has by the power of the gospel, converted, transformed, reanimated you. You likewise may justly be asked : What do ye now extraordinary ? How imminent was your danger ! The danger of sinking still deeper and deeper, of becoming progressively more senseless and vicious and miserable ; the danger of being hardened to the bondage of sin, and of passing over into the future world as slaves, as creatures totally ruined and undone, incapable of every good deed, of every superior degree of happiness ! How improbable was your correction and amendment, after having so long deferred it, and so frequently resisted every summons and excitement to it ! How extraordinary therefore is your good hap ! Similar to that of those who have been snatched from the flames, or pulled back from the brink of a yawning abyss. Are ye duly sensible of the greatness of your good fortune ? Is your gratitude to God, your deliverer, the more fervent and active, the greater and more imminent the danger which through him ye have escaped ? Does your example corroborate the truth of that sentence of Jesus : He to whom much is forgiven, will love much ? — Do ye now exert all your diligence, as much as possible to make amends for your negligence ? Do ye walk with redoubled speed the path of duty and virtue, the later it was that ye set out upon it, the farther ye are still from the

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the mark? Do ye the more heartily detest sin, the more thoroughly ye are acquainted by your own sad experience with its infamous and baneful effects? Do ye the more sedulously shun and avoid the opportunities and allurements to it, the more frequently ye have been fascinated, seduced, beguiled by it? Are ye the more prompt and officious to serve and assist others, and by all means to promote their welfare, by how much the less ye have formerly done so, by how much ye may perhaps have been injurious to others by your example, by words and actions, by the general tenour of your conduct? Do ye employ the years, the days, that are still left you, to so much the better purposes, the shorter and more uncertain they are, the more ye have still to make good respecting yourselves and others, and the more time ye have heretofore wasted on folly and vice? Certainly, unless this be your settled conduct, ye can neither be acquitted of the most flagrant ingratitude towards your deliverer, nor of the most criminal abuse of your good fortune.

And in this situation shall all of us be, my devout hearers, thus ungrateful and criminal shall we all be, unless we do more than others, unless we distinguish ourselves by virtue and goodness from the great mass of mankind, since there is not one of us who must not be ranked in one or another of the foregoing classes of particularly favoured persons. No, my dear friends, if we be in any
respect

respect particularly fortunate, let us also be particularly grateful to the author of our happiness. If God has favoured us with uncommon, with extraordinary benefits, let us not suffice ourselves with common virtues, with the ordinary constrained obedience to the divine commands, but shew our acknowledgement to our benefactor by purer, by resplendent virtues, by an unreserved, a willing and cheerful obedience. To possess superior endowments, and to render ourselves unworthy of them by a conduct at enmity with them; is the greatest infamy we can be guilty of: but to possess superior endowments, and by a faithful and generous employment of them to render ourselves capable and worthy of still more distinguished endowments; is glorious, truly glorious in the sight of God and man. Oh let us avoid that infamy more than poverty and misery and death, and strive for this glory more than any other. Thus shall we, as men, as christians, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, be partakers of eternal life, of everlasting, ever increasing felicity!

SERMON LVIII.

The Brevity and Burden of Life.

GOD, we are taught by reason and experience, but we are taught more explicitly by the lessons of thy son Jesus, that our life on earth is a pilgrimage, a state of discipline, of trial, of preparation. No; this life is not the whole of our destination, not our ultimate end, it is only the road that conducts us to it. Here we cannot do and become what, according to our capacities and abilities, we are capable of doing and becoming; but slowly and imperfectly can those be unfolded and these be set in motion. Here we can enjoy no pure satisfaction, no unmingled felicity. Here all is subject to inconstancy and vanity. Here we have no abiding city, no secure possession, no solid and lasting rest. Here all is rather means than end, rather sowing than reaping, rather preparative than fruition, much commencement but no completion. Here, o Father, thou hast placed thy children for education to a superior, a better life. Here, from entirely sensual, we are to learn
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to become rational creatures, and acquire a proficiency in wisdom and virtue. To this end all is constituted and ordained by thee ; hither tend all our wants, our relations and connections, all our businesses and employments, all our miscarriages and successes. Oh that we might but willingly and wholly submit to thy loving corrections, and by them be rendered continually wiser and better : that we might now regard, judge, use, enjoy all things, as is consistent with our present state ! If we are pilgrims, we ought not to be surprised if all the paths of our life are not equally even and safe and pleasant ; if we sometimes walk in gloomy, sometimes in rugged, dangerous and solitary ways ; are sometimes obliged to endure the burden and heat of the day, panting in vain for refreshment. If we be pilgrims, we should not be surprised that we are sometimes cheered and sometimes alarmed at the face of the sky ; if we experience alternately the solace and the inconveniences of the several parts of the day and seasons of the year ; if we sometimes proceed among flowers, sometimes among thorns ; if we sometimes meet with agreeable, sometimes with untoward events ; if we one while encounter obstacles and resistance, and then encouragements and support. In all contingencies we know that we pursue our course of life under thy governance, Almighty Parent, under thy protection ! We know that thou art our leader and guide, and that the end of all thy dispensations is
happiness !

happiness! In these sentiments and views, o God, we will encounter the businesses and accidents, the joys and the sorrows of life. To thee, our creator and father, and to Jesus, our antecessor and lord, and to the glorious prize at the end of our short pilgrimage, we steadfastly look. This shall give us strength and fortitude to do and to bear and to suffer whatever thou shalt call us to do and to bear and to suffer during the days of our pilgrimage here on earth. Be thou with us, Almighty and All-gracious, as thou usest to be with them that love thy name! With thee and through thee we are enabled to do all things; under the shadow of thy wings shall be our refuge, for there alone is undisturbed security and sweet repose. To thee we resign ourselves, for thou never forsakest them that trust in thee! Our father, &c.

JOB xiv. 1.

Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.

IT is an observation no less true than lamentable, my friends, that the knowledge and the conduct of mankind are very frequently at variance. Whoever bestows but the slightest observation on the whole tenour of their conduct, nay, if he only pay attention to himself, will always find examples enough of this gross inconsistency. I shall at present only notice one that immediately relates to my purpose. How general is the conviction of the
brevity

brevity of human life, and of the certainty of death! Who has ever doubted of those truths? Is it unknown to the monarch that he is mortal, any more than to his vassal? Is not the whole human race of one consent in this, that we have here no abiding city? How wise, how virtuous, how happy, would the human species be, were their conduct conformable to this conviction! But how rarely is that the case! Do not the generality live as if their life were never to have an end? They even not unfrequently form designs, and lay down plans, which would demand whole ages to accomplish; and the farther they advance in years, the greater and more extensive are their undertakings and views. Their thirst after wealth and honours daily becomes more vehement and insatiable; and never do they wish for them with greater avidity, than when they ought to reflect that they have not much time left to enjoy them. Their solicitude about all that relates to their temporal welfare increases in proportion as their wants diminish; and never do men make greater preparations for a quiet and undisturbed enjoyment of life, than when their age, and the decay of their faculties, advertise them that the term of it must be at hand. So manifest is the contrariety that in this respect subsists between the knowledge and the conduct of mankind. They deny not the truth of what we advance; but they suffer it to lie dormant within. They stave off the thoughts of death as
long

long as ever they can ; and the less they have reason to doubt of their mortality, the more studiously do they refuse their attention to that instructive, but awful subject. And yet it is impossible for us, my friends, to understand the value and design of life ; it is impossible for us properly to use the advantages of it, and to be duly prepared for the eternity to which we are hastening, unless we have a lively conviction of the short duration and the imperfection of our present state, as the ground of our several views and actions. To-day, my friends, we are again come a long stride nearer to our end and to eternity. Can I do better therefore than employ the present moments consecrated to devotion, in calling your recollection to these wholesome truths, and informing you of the influence they should have upon our hearts and our manners ? Our text invites us to these reflections. It contains two important propositions : the former relates to the shortness of our life. *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days.* The other to the troubles and inconveniences that are connected with the present life. *Man that is born of a woman, is full of trouble.*

Our life is of short duration. This is the first truth that our text invites us to consider. A truth which certainly requires no elaborate proof. We have nothing more to do than to set it in its proper point of view ; and to that end the following remarks will amply suffice. A moderate attention
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to the events that befall our fellow-creatures will teach us, that the greatest part of them are snatched away by death, while children. Scarcely become sensible to their earthly existence; scarcely have they cast a few confused glances on the objects that surround them; scarcely have they won the hearts of their parents by their innocent caresses: but they must quit the present scene of things, and exchange the light of the sun, which inspired them with joy, for the darkness of the grave. They are born; they suffer pain; their appetites awake; they begin to think and to wish; and ere their thoughts are formed, ere their wishes are gratified, they are overtaken by death, and their life, which was not much more than a dream, is come to an end. It is like a flower, which withers before its leaves had time to unfold. Then what a considerable portion of mankind fall a prey to the tomb in the liveliest period of their youth! The alert and sportive stripling feels his force. His understanding and his reason grow more active and busy. He is attentive to what passes without and within him. The beautiful scenery of nature, the charms of social life, affect him; and the avidity for happiness displays itself in all its vigour. He is in quest of pleasure, he even tastes it. He begins to reflect on himself; and in those happy moments, when his rational mind exerts its authority over sensual appetite, he reflects on the proper end of his being. He is on the way to its discovery,

very, and to form just conceptions of the purposes and the uses of life. Now he resolves to reduce his wild instincts to order, and to study the means of acquiring substantial happiness. But death, which he least of all things foresaw, snatches him away; and he must quit the world while just beginning to relish its comforts, and to lay the foundation of his future prosperity. Like the flower which opened into bloom at the dawn of day, soon nipped by the chilling blasts, droops and withers, ere it has felt the genial influence of the meridian sun. — Now however the boy has reached maturity, he has escaped the most dangerous age. Now he begins in reality to live. He acts with seriousness and deliberation. He resolves to make a rational choice of his occupations and pleasures, and to avoid the follies of youth. His happiness shall no longer consist in the sports of fancy, or lie at the mercy of chance. He will build it on a firm and lasting foundation. He forms to himself an extensive and as he thinks an infallible plan, for acquiring what he calls satisfaction and happiness, and actually labours with much effort in the execution of it. But all at once he is attacked by a violent disease, and he dies amidst the grand preparatives for the solace of his future life. Death defeats his schemes; and the fruits he hoped to reap from his exertions are buried with him. Thus are by far the greatest part of mortals hurried away from this state of existence, before they

rightly know that they are alive, or within a few years after they have learnt to understand the purposes, the interests, and the occupations of life. But few persons comparatively attain to what we usually term an advanced age. However, suppose a man to have passed through the several stages; let him have spun out his terrestrial life as far as may be in the ordinary course of things: how short, how momentary, will the duration of it appear to him, when, arrived at his latter days, he looks back on the past! And in fact, what a short period are seventy or eighty years to a man that has a rational soul, and never properly lives like a man, but when he is actually conscious of it! It is true, the generality of animals do not arrive to that period, but are forced much earlier to make room for succeeding generations. If we consider man merely in his animal nature, he has even in this particular a considerable advantage over the other creatures that surround him. But consider him, my friends, as he actually is, as an intelligent and rational being, that is conscious of himself, and whose life consists rather in the activity of his mind, than in the circulation of his blood and the movement of his body; and you will have much to deduct from the apparent amount of his days. The years of infancy and childhood, in which we cannot properly employ our nobler capacities, and act more from blind instinct than from consideration, must be subtracted from that

sum,

sum, as well as the years of extreme old age, when our faculties decline and our senses become dull and obtuse, and we not unfrequently revert to the melancholy state of infantine imbecility. Consequently nothing remains except youth and manhood, which alone can be called real life. But even the greatest part of this time glides away, unenjoyed in any way suitable to our high destination. Deduct from it the years we are deprived of by sleep, the brother of death. Deduct from it the days we pass in sickness and pain. Deduct from it in short the hours when, languishing in sorrow and trouble, our condition is so far from actual life, that it rather resembles a lingering death. How small a sum total of days will remain after these deductions, deserving the name of a rational and happy life! Certainly our life is short in proportion to the many and important affairs we have to transact; it is momentary with regard to our soul, which is formed for immortality: it is an undiscernible point, it is nothing, in comparison with the eternity and immutability of the supreme being. The writers of the sacred books seem at a loss as it were for terms and images to describe in colours sufficiently strong the uncertainty of our abode upon earth. Job says, Man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth as a shadow and continueth not. Behold, says David to the Lord of Life, thou hast made

my days as a hand-breadth, and my age is as nothing before thee. As for man, says he in another place, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. Man is like a thing of nought: his time passeth away like a shadow. This is the first consideration for convincing us of the vanity and emptiness of our terrestrial life, and for inspiring us with a longing for a better state. Our life is of very short and precarious duration.

But this is not all. Were the few moments which we have here to pass a succession of agreeable sensations and happy contingences, we might perhaps overlook the shortness of them. But is not the case very different with our present condition? How numerous are the evils and dangers, how many the calamities and troubles to which we are subject from our nativity till our earthly course is run? How often are our joys converted into sorrows? How much are we curtailed of our pleasure by the languor that either mixes with it, or arises from it? Man that is born of a woman, says our text, is of few days and full of trouble. Let us proceed now, my friends, to consider somewhat more closely, the lot of man on this side also, by casting a look on the inevitable misery he is exposed to here on earth. I speak not at present of the extraordinary misfortunes which this or the other individual, this or the other particular society,

society, meets with. I speak not of the deplorable lot of those mortals who are unjustly forced to pass their days in bonds and captivity, in gloomy dungeons, in continual fear of death; or of the still more miserable slaves of vice, who by their horrible excesses have plunged themselves into utter ruin. These are peculiar instances, standing in no necessary connection with our present state. I am contemplating mankind in general; and my aim is to call your attention to those circumstances and misfortunes, which are common to all and to every one, though in divers degrees. Every stage of human life supplies me with particular evidence of the great imperfection of our terrestrial life.

Consider the new-born babe, and bewail the doleful sight. He has neither sense nor strength to support his life, and no sooner has he perceived the light, than he is in danger of losing it. Cries and lamentations are the first sounds he utters: his first breathings are complaints. He feels already that he has entered on a state beset by a thousand calamities and troubles. Unable to do anything for himself, he entirely depends in all respects on extraneous help. Heat and cold, hunger and thirst, would soon destroy him, did not the tenderness of his parents, or the compassion of the by-standers step in to his relief. But the mitigation of the pain he feels, and which he expresses by weeping and wailing, is not always to be

be compassed by the most assiduous care, since the cause of it cannot be known. So pitiable is the entrance of man on the stage of the world! So miserably does he pass the first years of his being! Man, who is constituted the lord of the creatures, is, in his infancy, much weaker and more necessitous than any of them. Through numberless accidents and dangers he grows up, and still is dependant and feeble; still ignorant of the means of supplying his wants; still incapable of protecting his health and his life. His ideas are obscure and confused; his desires reach not much beyond animal instinct; his pleasure consists in empty trifles; his occupations are ridiculous follies. He admires everything, and knows nothing. He longs for everything, and understands not the proper use and application of anything. Truth and error are equally indifferent to him; and the rectitude of his actions is solely determined by the blame or applause of his tutors. He lives whole years ere he knows that he is alive, ere he has the faintest idea of the design of his being.

At length he arrives at the years of discretion. His understanding unfolds; his conceptions are clearer; his reason has greater share in his determinations and actions. He is more independent, and a part of his deportment and happiness is left to his own discretion. He feels his powers; his taste undergoes a change; his appetites grow vehement, and he knows how they are to be gratified.

fied. He now fancies himself happy, since the years of constraint and subjection are over. But he commonly rushes into a heavier thralldom than that which in his childhood cost him so many sobs. Confident in his imaginary wisdom, he makes his appearance in the great world; and yet is woefully ignorant both of himself and the rest of his species. Here he is encompassed on all sides with hidden snares and traps, which even the most experienced cannot always elude or detect. The appetites are clamorous, and their gratification puts on the appearance of allowable juvenile frolics; they promise him ravishing joys; and on hearkening to their promises, he finds himself miserably disappointed. The calm repose of innocence that gladdened his heart is gone; furious passions carry him captive at will, and he shortly becomes the wretched slave of those cruel, relentless tyrants. One day deluded by hope, the next confounded by fear. One moment dejected with sorrow, the next elated with joy. Now tormented by ambition, then transported with rage; one while enflamed with the lust of revenge, now corroded by envy, then tortured by love. His health is impaired, his faculties decline; and he is still as remote from the happiness he is aiming at, as ever he was before. He has lost the command of himself; and the discord, the conflicts, the contrariety of his appetites, debilitate his mind, render him incapable of all real pleasure, and never desist from

from their clamour, till he has learnt to master himself, and to abhor his extravagances.

Now follow the years of manhood ; and he finds himself obliged, by wearisome toil, by close application, to provide for the future. He enters upon new connections, which lay him under new obligations, and bring with them new incumbrances. He becomes citizen, father, master ; and, though these relations open to him various sources of pleasure, which he never has known before, yet they commonly likewise augment his troubles and cares. The management of his domestic œconomy, the discharge of his office, the concerns of his business, demand the exertion of all his faculties ; and not seldom is he obliged to deny his most darling propensities, for the sake of performing his duties to others. He now finds it difficult to procure subsistence for himself and his family, and is forced to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Now he runs the hazard of losing his property, and of falling into want, by misfortune or fraud. Now sickness and pain prevent him from following his vocation, and enjoying the accommodations of life. Then his honour is attacked ; his good name is brought into question ; his repose is disturbed by litigations and quarrels ; his adversaries endeavour to compass his ruin. He sees very often the failure of his honest and prudent undertakings ; and even the persons with whom he is the most strictly allied, cause him at times

times the most pungent affliction. Amidst all these vicissitudes and troubles, his years are still advancing. At length the days come on, when he says, I have no pleasure in them. The senses grow obtuse, and he is incapable of relishing the recreations intended to alleviate the burden of life. The intellect is frequently weak, and the man sinks into a state of helplessness resembling that of his infancy. He may even become an object of scorn and derision to them who are under most obligations to him. His body is infirm, and bending towards the grave under the pressure of accumulated evils. His temper is peevish; he is out of humour with himself and with the world. He torments himself with groundless suspicions, and consumes his remaining faculties in extravagant complaints, or in pining grief. He is so pusillanimous, that the very shadow of danger appalls and confounds him. Thus does man too often pass the concluding scene of his life, and quits at length the turbulent stage, on which he has performed so many different parts, and has experienced so many changes of fortune; evidence complete, my friends, that our earthly life is not only short and frail, but is chequered moreover with miseries of various kinds, which though not met with by all men in the same proportion, are yet to be wholly avoided by none.

But is our life absolutely interwoven with so many perils, distresses and troubles; oh then,
pious

pious hearers, let us never add to their number by a disorderly and criminal conduct ! The natural evils that are in the world, are incomparably much smaller and easier to be borne, than the sad effects of sin, for which we have only to thank our own abuse of the faculties and freedom with which we are endowed. Sin is the destruction of man. The unruly passions by which we submit to be swayed are the most inveterate enemies to our quiet and happiness ; they are the most abundant sources of every species of woe ; they destroy not only our temporal welfare, but their baneful consequences extend even into eternity. So long as a man is the slave to his lusts, so long of necessity must he be wretched. Let us then use all diligence, my friends, to liberate ourselves from that cruel captivity. Let us carefully apply to the means which revelation affords for governing our appetites and instincts, and strenuously struggle for real liberty. So will the principal sources of our miseries be stopped, and we shall effectually cease to be miserable. A pious and virtuous conduct must on the other hand greatly alleviate the unavoidable troubles and sweeten the bitternesses of life. Virtue and the fear of God, alone are able to conduct us on this stormy ocean, and assist us in every worthy purpose. They alone are able to preserve our hearts in peace, and procure us the enjoyment of permanent pleasure : they alone can render tolerable the adverse events that befall us, and inspire

spire us with comfort and courage even in the most distressing afflictions. They never forsake their faithful adherents: they support them even in the most alarming dangers. Resign yourselves to their wise direction. Follow their sound advice. Then, if you cannot be entirely exempt from the imperfections, the misfortunes of your present state, yet you will certainly feel them in a much smaller degree.

If our life, pious hearers, be so short and insecure; how irrational is it, to confine our hopes to these few moments, and to seek the whole of our happiness here on earth! All that the world can bestow is not sufficient to content our soul: as neither adequate to its capacities nor commensurate with its desires. We impose upon ourselves in thinking to build our felicity on the unstable possession and enjoyment of these fugacious objects. No! we are formed for eternity. Our present condition is only a state of preparation and discipline: it only contains the first act of our life which is never to terminate. The christian revelation points out to us an everlasting, a consummately perfect life, that awaits us beyond the grave; a life that will be as rich in unmingled joy and real pleasure, as the present can be fertile in evils and pains. That blissful, that undecaying life, should be the object of our affections, our views and exertions; it should be the principal ground of our hopes and our comfort. Let us
then

then tread with joy the way that leads us thither, not turning aside from it to the right hand or to the left. Our master and lord has gone that way before us, and now calls to us from the throne of his glory : Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He will support us himself by his power, and carry us through all temptations. Yes, beneath his protecting arm, we shall undauntedly meet the grisly spectre death, who threatens us with total destruction ; and we, who fix our thoughts not on the visible but on the unseen world, shall hereafter exchange the sufferings of time and the troubles of life, for an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

And these generous sentiments, these exalted hopes, my friends, as I wish every day of my life that you may possess, so particularly on the present, as the most precious gift that I can implore for you of the divine mercy. It gives me at all times a sensible pleasure, when God prospers your outward affairs ; when he bestows upon you health and strength, peace and contentment ; when he averts from you all harms and losses, crowns your honest exertions with abundant success, and grants you to enjoy the fruit of your diligence and industry with contented and cheerful hearts ; and I humbly pray that it may please him, the giver of all good, to shed upon you the dew of his blessing, to vouchsafe you an ample measure of earthly comforts, to guard with his mighty protection
both

both you and your families, to increase your trade and commerce, to refuse all evil an entrance to your dwellings, and to grant you all that is most useful and profitable to each according to his particular necessities. But it is my most fervent prayer, that your immortal spirits may be saved, that you may be always becoming more wise and virtuous, and be fitted and approved of for that everlasting happiness to which as christians you are called. All else is but of momentary duration : the flexuous rivulets of corporeal things are all contemptible. They vanish away like a dream ; they abandon their possessor, and cannot help him in death. It is only the grace of God, only a good conscience, only a virtuous and holy life, only the hope of never ending felicity, that remain with us even in death, that go along with us into the future world, and there form the foundation of our supreme felicity. Oh that it may therefore please God to guide and keep you all on the way that leads to the attainment of those inestimable and everlasting blessings ! May his light enlighten, his grace awaken the sinners who still slumber in death, who are still earthly minded and careless about their salvation. May he cause them to see the danger to which they are exposed ; may he fill them with salutary terror, with an eager desire to deliver their souls, and guide their feet into the way of peace. May he also keep, confirm, comfort and rejoice all those who seek
before

before all things his kingdom and his righteousness. May he take them by the hand upon his paths that their footsteps slip not, and cause them to proceed from one stage of perfection to another.

O God, look down in thy mercy upon us, and fulfil our petitions. Save thy people, and bless thy heritage. Prosper them and uphold them for ever. Shed thy grace and heavenly benediction upon our sovereign and his family and on all the magistrates of the realm. Bless all, both high and low, rich and poor, young and old, and conduct us all, as thy children, through the troubles, dangers and temptations of the world, to thy kingdom in heaven, where, with all those who have departed this life in thy faith and fear, we may praise thy mercy and truth, for ever and ever, through Jesus Christ, our lord. Amen.

New year's day.

THE END.

TODTENFEIER ZOLLIKOFERS.

O D E.

VON
KARL HEINRICH HEYDENREICH.

— Um ihn stehn in Versammlungen
Seine Thaten umher, jede mit Licht gekrönt,
Jede bis zu dem Richter
Seine sanfte Begleiterin.

KLOPSTOCK.

ER schwebt empor; die Hülle des Staubs verliert
Den grossen Fremdling; siegend mit Adlerflug
Enteilt der Schatten deinen Stürmen,
Land der Verwesungen und der Thränen!
O schwebe mit ihm, Säng'rin des Trauerlieds,
Zu der Vollendung heiligem Stern' empor!
Lass deiner Klagesaiten Töne
Kühn in den Jubel der Geister strömen!
Des Sterns Gestade wimmeln von Harrenden,
Und Friedensdüfte wehet schon mancher Kranz,
Und aus der Vorzeit traute Schatten
Ahnden sein Kommen mit frohem Zittern;
Er naht, und sanft mit Hauchen der Lieb' umwehn
Ihn milde Lüfte, tragen ihn lind empor,
Und das Gestad des Sterns ertönet
Von der Unsterblichen frohen Grüssen.
O feiert ihn, Bekröntze der Ewigkeit!
Von euren Harfen ströme mit Meereskraft
Die hohe Hymne! Trautes Einklangs
Wallte sein Leben, wie eure Töne!

Und

Und horch! es hallt durch Höhen und Tiefen schon
Das Feierlied, die Schaaren umringen ihn,

“ Zum Anschau'n Gottes, frommer Schatten!”

Führen mit Jauchzen ihn fort zum Throne.

Zurück im Fluge, Säng'rin des Trauerlieds!

Dich fesseln irdsche Banden am Grabe noch,

Und höher schwillt der Wehmuth Woge

Bey der Vollendeten frohem Jauchzen.

Verhalt, ihr Jubel! Spottet des Staubes nicht!

Am Grabe, wo die ernste Cypresse winkt,

Da will ich weilen, und die Saiten

Sollen ihm seufzen dem grossen Geiste. —

Wer schwebt dort nieder? Dämmernder Flor
verbirgt

Des Lich gewandes blendenden Sonnenglanz,

Und Genien im Trauerschleier

Schweben mit Aechzen an ihrer Seite,

Ihr Antlitz Milde, aber die Wehmuth schwebt

Darauf mit bangen Schatten, die Purpurglut

Der Wangen schimmert matt durch Thränen, —

“ Himmlische Traurerin! sprich, wer bist du?”

“ Bin ich dir fremd, so spotte mit Liedern nicht

Des frommen Schatten! Feire du Könige

In unbethränkten Marmorsärgen!

Lass den geheiligten Weisen schlummern!

Wem fur des Herzens grosses Gelübd die Welt

Des Staubs zu klein ist, wer mit der Ahndung Flug

In schauervollen Mitternächten

Kühn um die Sterne des Himmels schwebet,

Wer

Wer meine Bande segnet, den Himmlischen
 Durch mich verwandt ist, — Genien! öfnet ihm
 Den Trauerkreis, und banges Einklangs
 Walle sein Seufzer in unsre Lieder!"

Du bists! Ein Graun der näheren Gottheit weht
 Durch meine Seele, heilige Religion!

O die du Thränenströme troknest,
 Werth deiner Thräne war iener Schatten!

Sink nieder Göttin! Siehe schon bebt zurück
 Die Nacht des Grabes; blendender Sonnenglanz
 Bestrahlt die Wohnung der Gebeine;

Hofnungen winken im Morgenschimmer;
 Hauch in Gesange, Göttin, die Trauer aus!
 Schön wie der Morgen, Genien, wenn der Thau
 Auf frischen Purpurblüten zittert!

Heiligt mit Liedern des Frommen Asche!
 Schweigt, Seufzer aus dem Busen der Irdischen!
 Im fernen Haine brause der wilde Sturm!

Des Kirchhofbaums Geräusch verstumme!
 Friede den Trauern und ihren Tönen!

Schwebe, sanfte Ruh,
 Um die heilige Gruft!
 Mit des Schwänenfittigs
 Leisem wiegendem Wehn
 Schwebe, holder Engel,
 Um die heilige Gruft!
 Erde! Dies Gebein
 Ist dein schönster Schmuck;
 Schöner denn die Zeder,
 Die in Wolken sich wiegt,

Und die junge Rose,
Die im Thau blinkt.
Kaum ein matter Strahl
Flimmert, Erde, dir
Von dem fernen Sterne,
Wo der Schatten nun wohnt,
Den in dieser Hülle
Deine Luft geküsst.
Mild, wie Abendthau,
Der die Saat erquikt,
Und der müden Blume
Nieder zitterndes Haupt,
Floss des Mannes Rede
Tief ins offne Herz.
Thränend fläuntet ihr,
Wie im Traum der Nacht,
Zeigt et euch im Bilde
Euer schimmerndes Glück,
In des Staubes Samen
Keim der Ewigkeit;
Gottes Vorgefühl,
Ahnden schöner Welt,
Sehnsucht nach dem Morgen,
Den kein Abend bedroht,
Bebten durch die Reihen
Frommer Hörer hin.
"Gottheit spricht aus ihm!"
Fühlte jedes Herz,
Um der Mädchen Wangen
Schwebte heiliges Graun,

Und

Und des Greises Hofnung
Wallte übers Grab.
Wie der Morgenstrahl
Sanft den Wanderer lenkt,
Der im tiefen Haine
Nachts die Pfade verlorh,
Führte den Verirrten
Er zurück zu Gott.
Bruderharmonie
Einte Herz und Mund ;
Wie zween traute Bäche
Gleiches Laufes entfliehn,
Floss, wie seine Rede
Schön sein Leben hin.
Ueber seiner Gruft,
Weiht im Abendroth,
Väter, wenn die Stille
Zu Gefühlen uns wekt,
Weiht dann eure Kinder
Hier zur Tugend ein !
Ihre Wang' umschwebt
Lind ein heiliges Graun,
"Werdet wie der Weise,
Der entschlummert hier liegt,
Und die Gräber schrecken
Nimmer eure Brust!"
Feinde! Reicht euch hier
Sanft versöhnt die Hand!
Priester, die vergassen,
Dass Gott Liebe nur ist,

Weinet

Weinet hier der Reue
Aedlen Thränenguss !
Seine Thaten wiegt
Gott und segnet ihn ;
"Sey der Engel Bruder !"
Tönt der richtende Spruch,
Und die Engel lächeln :
" Geist ! Wir lieben dich !"
Blüht, ihr Blumen, blüht,
Die er hier gepflanzt !
Schont, unheilge Stürme,
Schont der lachenden Flur !
Es bevölk'r ihr Saamen
Einst die Ewigkeit !
Ewig schläfst du nicht,
Dorrendes Gebein ;
In der grausen Tiefe
Säuselt schaffender Hauch,
Und verüngtes Lebens
Wirst du auferstehn !
Schwebe, sanfte Ruh,
Um die heilge Gruft !
Mit des Schwanenfittigs
Leisem wiegendem Wehn,
Schwebe, holder Engel,
Um die heilige Gruft !

Mr. ZOLLIKOFER'S Sermons, now presented to the English public, sufficiently evince that just conceptions of religion, morality, sound philosophical reasoning, purity and simplicity are not peculiar to the English pulpit. They breathe the pure and genuine spirit of christianity, and they exhibit religion to our view in a form the most animating and alluring; for, avoiding to terrify her votaries by disfiguring her bright countenance with an austere and gloomy brow, they rather invite and encourage all to approach her presence, as to a kind and condescending queen, who sits serene and cheerful on her throne, and dispenses to all her subjects true wisdom, consolation, peace and joy. We see little in these Sermons, indeed, to display the theological learning of their author, and little that is explanatory in regard to peculiar texts of scripture; they discuss not human creeds and systems of divinity: but they explain the nature and grounds of christian morality, and reconcile it with the best dictates of philosophy; they reveal man to himself, and discover a talent seldom possessed — a knowledge of the human heart. — In one word, we recommend them to every description of readers, since — they have this merit, that, without any profound discussion or metaphysical research, they contain the pure and undisguised morals of the gospel, arrayed in an easy and attractive garb.

Monthly Review.

These discourses are not dry and didactic, but full of animation and energy: they speak to the heart: they disclose to man what he is intended to be, and on what trifling objects the majority of his species make their happiness depend. — The Sermons before us are highly worthy of the attention of the young English divine; and as they are very easily analyzed, he would find his compositions gradually improved, if, after several times reading one of them over, he would select its chief heads, and in his own language dilate upon them from the pulpit. Were he thus to act, he might soon dispense with his notes: he would in a short time acquire a sufficient facility of addressing an audience from his memory, of speaking to their hearts, and of impressing them with sentiments worthy of his office.

Prefixed to every sermon is a prayer referring in general to the topic of the discourse; and, at this is a

practice adopted in most churches, from which indeed our own establishment offers no deviation, the young divine will be much assisted in his compositions by attending to the piety, the just application, and the animated expression which characterise the prayers of Zollikofer.

Critical Review.

This celebrated Divine is distinguished from the generality of preachers by the truth of his composition, the sententious solemnity of his manner, the elaborate perspicuity of his diction, the precise appropriation of his terms, the closeness of his argument, the concinnity and elegance of his style, and the flowing eloquence of his periods, insomuch that he has been not unfitly called the Christian Cicero.

In the Sermons of Zollikofer we see displayed the innate strength of truth, combined with the easy grace of nature. Skilled in tracing the source and current of moral action, he detects the hidden motive and the human principle. He possesses the happy talent of winning the affections, of fixing the wavering thought, and of blending instruction with delight ; so that his Sermons, as has no less justly than frequently been observed, are the most entertaining as well as the most improving of all others.

If we advert to the life of this man we find it free from every foible, and not less adorned by science than regulated by the spirit of the gospel. We behold the perfected christian addressing his auditory in the name and by the authority and with the solemn majesty of his divine Master, whose instructions he delivers immediately from himself ; and therefore all he utters assumes an awful influence over the mind, commanding oftentimes even an involuntary assent. Hence it is that persons of all sects and parties in religion, though they may otherwise view him with alien eyes, feel nevertheless that he attracts their observance and commands their reverence. And while the religious agonistics are earnestly contending as the votaries of Paul or of Apollos, the votaries of Cephas, of Martin Luther, or of Jean Chauvin, we find in these volumes no other than the sincere votary of Jesus Christ. The Translator has rendered ample justice to his original.

Gentleman's Magazine.

